The Creation of the World, the Deluge, and other Naxi myths

Pedro Ceinos-Arcones

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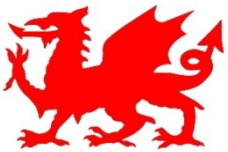

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Foreword

This book presents a bunch of diverse materials, collected or translated over the last ten years. It is possible that the different origin of the materials, and the different authorship of the translations, since the "I" of ten years ago is not the same as that of two years ago, is still visible to some of the readers, despite the effort I have made to provide it with a certain narrative coherence and a certain uniform style.

The main part of it is the three great myths of the Naxi minority: *The Creation of the World*, *The War between Dong and Shu*, and *The History of Kama Yumiji*. Each of them is a complete ritual text used in special ceremonies by the Dongba priests, so the original translations of these texts are difficult for the uninitiated to understand. They are also full of literary resources useful to the oral tradition, which I have simplified here as much as possible, and of references to the history, life, and culture of the Naxi, which I have clarified by means of a few footnotes, insofar as my humble possibilities have allowed me. The three myths are very important to understanding the culture of the Naxi. Another of the basic myths of this people is *Congren Bandi seeks immortality*, because it justifies the use of numerous plants and animals for medicinal purposes.

Besides these four myths, there are other short stories that I have translated at different times, and that without providing any

special insight into the Naxi culture, I think can entertain everyone and enlighten some readers on certain aspects of their culture.

There are also five stories of the ingenious Aydan, a character much loved by all Naxi, whose stories have been told for centuries in family gatherings, unfortunately almost unknown in the West. Aydan is just one of the many ingenious characters present in the oral literature of China's minorities, a completely unknown genre of which I will release a few more samples in the near future. The book ends with a few pages in which a small sample of the proverbs of the Naxi have been translated. Proverbs are an important educational tool in oral tradition peoples, allowing the reader who observes their culture from the outside to get an idea of the philosophical and moral ideas of the man in the street. They are also, many times, pearls of wisdom that we could call global, so we hope that at least some of them deserve a few minutes of reflection on the part of the readers.

Readers who want to know more about the life, history and culture of the Naxi people are suggested to read my book *Sons of Heaven, brothers of nature: The Naxi of Southwest China.* In this book I already made an effort to present to readers the main aspects of Chinese culture in a language understandable to the general reader.

I believe that the greatest virtue of this book is that it provides English-speaking readers with a series of materials never before translated into their language. Even for readers who are fluent in English or French most of these myths have never been translated, for I am only aware of the translation of the Creation of the World into English and French, and the second half of the myth of Kama Yumiji into English. Their major defect is likely to stem from the long period of time over which their materials have been collected. On the other hand, this work does not and does not attempt to provide a general idea of Naxi mythology or literature.

I want to thank Wei Hua for his continued help in translating the darkest passages of these myths.

Finally, it should be noted that this book, self-published by the author to be read on digital platforms or printed on demand, has not benefited from the laborious proofreading processes common in commercial editions that so much improve the editing and final presentation of a work.

The Creation of the World

In remote times the sky and the earth were in continuous agitation, trees could walk, stones could speak. The sky, the earth, the sun and the moon, the stones and the trees, water and fire, the mountains and rivers had not yet been formed, but there was the reflection[1] of the sky and the earth, the reflection of the sun and the moon, the reflection of stones and trees, the reflection of fire and water, the reflection of rivers and mountains, and the reflection of rivers and streams[2].

Then an aspiration and a sound were transformed giving origin to a god called Igu Ake, which in turn was transformed giving origin to a white egg. The egg was transformed into a white chicken, which had no name but was called Enyu Enman by the house of Dong[3]. After a while aspiration and sound were also transformed giving rise to a god called Igu Tina, which in turn gave rise to a black egg, which became a black chicken, a chicken that had no name but was called Fujin Annan by the house of Shu.

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[1] Yingzi could also be translated as "shadow", although I think "reflection" is more appropriate in this context.

[2] Among the Dongba themselves there are different versions of this myth, with small variations depending on the ceremony in which it will be sung.

[3] Dong and Shu refer to two clans, which possibly existed at the time when Naxi society was organized around clans. They are enemies, one representing white and the other black, so their war, described in detail in another of the fundamental myths of the Naxi *The War of Black and White*, can represent a dualistic and Manichaean view of the universe.

Enyu Enman grew up with a very, very white and very beautiful body. He used three white clouds from the sky to make his clothes, and three bunches of meadow grass to make his nest, in which he laid nine pairs of white eggs, which after being hatched became gods and saints. Fujin Anman grew up with a black body, very dark and extremely ugly. He laid nine pairs of black eggs, which after being hatched gave rise to demons.

The carpenters who opened the sky were nine powerful gods; the artisans who separated the earth were seven [4] intelligent goddesses. Their work could not be completed successfully as heaven and earth remained in continual agitation. Seeing that the separation of heaven and earth was not as stable as they wished, they continued searching for a form, and so in the east they erected a pole with a white conch, in the south they erected a pole with green jade, in the west one with a black pearl, in the north one with yellow gold and in the center another of white iron. Then using a sapphire they pushed the sky up, and using yellow gold they pressed the earth down. In this way, heaven and earth began to separate.

Not long after, the gods and saints deliberated, the powerful and the wise argued about the best place to erect a sacred mountain. Then a great force gathered and under the direction of the great god of the nine heights, in the end, the sacred mountain Junaruolou was built[5] and the sky and the earth stopped moving.

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[4] In the symbolism of the Naxi and other peoples of related languages and cultures the nine is invariably the masculine symbol and the seven the feminine. While the relationship of the number seven with the woman is documented among many other cultures in China and around the world, as it refers to the similarity of the menstrual cycle and the lunar cycle, the association of the number nine with the male element does not have such a clear origin.

[5] Junaruoluo Mountain is for the Naxi the *axis mundi*. The place where heaven and earth communicate. It may be a local adaptation of Hindu Mount Sumeru or Mount Kailas, sacred to Hindus and Tibetans.

On that mountain there was a wagtail[6] with a white body, although on its tail it had a black feather, so one can't say that it was completely white either. A black raven also lived above her, with all its body black, but in its wing it had three white feathers, so it cannot be said that it was completely black. The white butterfly. It can be said that it personifies white, although his birth is not so good either. It is born in the cold third month of winter, its wings have lost their strength by the icy wind of winter, it flutters from here to there, always ending at the foot of the mountain. This surely shows its weakness, seeing it that way, it is not a personification of the white either. The black ant, it can be said that it is a personification of the black thing, but its birth is not very good either, since it does it in the bitter heat of the third month of the summer. Her waist is so delicate that sometimes it does not allow it to overcome the summer downpours, being dragged by the water to distant seas. Can it be considered a personification of the black?[7]

In ancient times, the sound of a mumbling arose from above, and the hissing of an aspiration arose from below. The sound and the aspiration melted into three drops of white dew, which ended up forming three great seas. Henren was born in the middle of the sea. Henren begot Meiren, whose seventh-generation descendant became the ancestor of mankind, according to the following genealogy: Meiren Shishi, Shishi Ciyu, Ciyu Chuju, Chuju Jiuren, Jiuren Jiesheng, Jiesheng Congren, Congren Lien[8].

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[6] It is characterized by its white body with some black spots.

[7] This paragraph offers a vivid description of the *taiji* or symbol of the Taoist *yin-yang*, highlighting the emphasis on the existence of black dots within the domain of the white and white dots between the black, that is, denying absolute values and emphasizing a world in continuous transformation.

[8] A clear example of how people's names are constructed among the Naxi and other Yi related peoples. We see that the son takes the last part of his father's name and adds his name.

Congren Lien had five brothers and six sisters, who had no qualms about marrying each other. The stench of such a pestilent matter came to heaven and angered the gods. Then the sun and the moon stopped shining, the mountains and valleys began to weep. The mountains collapsed, the earth cracked, the water flooded everything predicting a severe disaster.

Congren Lien climbed[9] to the top of the mountain. He wanted to catch the silver pheasant that was on a tree, but when he arrived it was too late. He went then to the top of the plateau, he wanted to herd the flocks of white goats like clouds, but he also came too late. He had no ability for work and went to learn from the ant, he had also no ability to have fun and went to learn from the white butterfly. He did not know how to cultivate the land, but using a black-eyed bull and a chestnut wood plow, he walked to the place of the god Dong and the god Se, and tilled the land. Angry, these gods released a fierce wild boar with long fangs. In such a way that what he cultivated during the day, the wild boar destroyed at night. Then Congren Lien set a trap in the middle of the newly open field. For a whole day and a night he waited at the edge of the field without any result, but on the second day, in the morning the wild boar fell into the trap.

When Lien caught him, he was very happy. Then he took out the machete that he carried around his waist thinking about killing the wild boar as soon as possible. But before he can do anything an old man with long hair and a white beard and an old woman leaning on a cane came to him with a forced smile. Due to their sudden appearance, Congren Lien did not know where to hold on and a cold sweat slipped through his body. Nervously he took the plow thinking of leaving, but in his haste he plowed the old man, breaking a piece of the silver cap he wore on his head. The old

[9] Congren Lien, the protagonist of this myth, is one of the most important figures of the Naxi, as he is considered their first human ancestor.

man screamed and the sky shook. When he was about to take the blade from the plow, he did so carelessly that he struck the old woman's cane and broke a piece of it. The old woman screamed and the earth moved.

Congren Lien was very frightened, so he apologized to the elders: "Old man, does it hurt? I'll give you a rub, okay?" Then he said to the woman. "Old lady, does it hurt or didn't I hurt you? Do you want me to make you a bandage?" The old man said, "Congren Lien. You wanted to climb the tree to catch the silver pheasant, but you were late. You wanted to go to the plateau to herd the goats, but you were late. Your brothers and sisters have sinned seriously, the punishment will come early.[10]"

When Congren Lien heard him, he knelt before them and begged them to save his life. The two elders, seeing his attitude of sincere repentance, spoke to him in this way: "You're going to kill a white-footed yak and tear off its skin to make a drum, which you'll sew with a fine needle and a fat thread. On the drum you'll put twelve long strings. Tie three cords to the top of the cypress, three to the top of the fir tree, let three loose in the space, and three others you shall fasten to the ground. Take a big fat goat, a yellow pig and a dog of the same color, a rooster as white as snow, nine types of cereal seeds, and place everything inside the drum. In addition to not forgetting these things, put inside a machete and a sickle, and when everything is ready, you can also sit inside the drum."

When Congren Lien returned home, he told her brothers and sisters what had happened, and they rushed to go to the elders to beg for their mercy. Without wishing to extend his favors to them,

[10] It is noteworthy that while in many of the indigenous mythologies of China there is incest after the deluge that allows the creation of the new humanity from the two brothers who survive it, between the Naxi, on the contrary, the deluge that exterminates humanity is a punishment precisely for the incest of the brothers of Congren Lien.

the old man told them to kill a pig and make a drum by sewing its skin with a fat needle and a fine thread, without telling them to take anything with them, but that it would be enough for them to sit inside.

Three days later the sky began to roar and the earth to scream; above the mountains collapsed and the valleys cracked, the tigers and leopards could not save their lives; below the flooded water washed everything away, neither the otters nor the fish could move. The sun and the moon stopped shining, sun and night, everything was just as dark and silent. The white pine was shattered by lightning, and Lien Jingu, Congren Lien's brother, was thrown at the ninth cloud, no one knows where his body was and where he was buried. The red chestnut was shattered by an explosion, Lien Kuagu, another of his brothers, was launched to the seventh layer of the earth, without knowing where his body was or where he was buried. Congren Lien's brothers and sisters followed the instructions of the elders and perished during the flood.

Lien sat inside the drum, with only the darkness around him, and a feeling of terror and fear. At that time called heaven without receiving a response, wanted to ask for help but did not know where. The leather drum floated in the middle of the sea. It floated for a long time, then was thrown against the flank of a high mountain and was descending its slope, startling Lien, who took the knife from his waist and slit the leather coming out. The panorama he discovered stunned him. Everywhere there only was desolation. One can't see a living person, not even an animal. Before his eyes were only empty mountains and valleys spreading endlessly. When he saw that panorama, he couldn't help but burst into sobs.

From inside the drum he released a lamb, which immediately began to howl.

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

"It's not that I cry with joy," replied the lamb, "but as a puppy you gave me green grass to eat and now that I'm an adult you don't give it to me. The green grass of the earth I don't know where I can take it. I cry calling the grass."

From the inside of the drum he then released a little dog, which immediately barked without a break.

"Why are you crying?" Congren Lien asked.

"It's not that I'm crying with joy," replied the dog, "but as a puppy you gave me white rice soup to eat, and now that I'm an adult you don't give it to me. The world's white rice soup I don't know where it went. I call the soup white rice."

He then released a chick, which immediately began to chirp.

"Why are you crying?" He asked him, too.

"It's not that I cry with joy, but as a puppy you gave me white grains to eat and now that I'm an adult you don't give them to me. The white grains of the earth I don't know where they've gone. I call the white grains."

There were no people on earth, only flies. Flies flying to fill the sky. There was no cattle, only herbs that stretched to infinity. Congren Lien felt lonely and sad. His eyes filled with tears. The snow that melts from the high mountains is for men the coldest water, but his heart was even colder. Congren Lien wore on his body a coarse tunic, to his shoulder he carried a quiver with the arrows and a great bow of mulberry wood. While he was walking he was singing, but nobody responded with his songs[11], only the sounds of the mountain and the response of the valleys kept him

[11] Among the Naxi, especially among the shepherds, it is quite common to engage in antiphonal songs that sometimes begin even before the two people have seen each other, but since one listens to the songs or the music of the "mouth harp" of the other.

company[12], and so, with nothing to worry about, he continued walking, passing a cold and solitary existence.

It's not known how many days it took until he got to the foot of a big mountain. In front of him was the Liconglina meadow. There he discovered that smoke could be seen, a thread of smoke as fine as the one that ascends from a stick of incense; when night came he distinguished a fire that shone like the crest of a rooster, whose brightness dyed the whole sky red.

Then Congren Lien went there. Next to the fire, he met an old man with a long beard, as thick as a vine and as white as snow, who came to his side and said: "There is no humanity in the world anymore." When Congren Lien heard this news, he was astonished, but at the same time he was happy for this encounter, so kneeling before the old man he begged him: "Old man, have mercy on me. Without anyone else in this world I feel so sad and lonely, I want to have someone to work with me during the day and rest by my side at night, but if there is no longer any person in the world, what remedy is there for me?"

The old man said to him, "At the foot of the highest of the beautiful mountains live two goddesses. There is a very beautiful one with vertical eyes and another that is not so beautiful with horizontal eyes. For nothing in the world should you forget that you cannot desire the goddess with vertical eyes, for you can only marry the goddess with horizontal eyes." Congren Lien said goodbye to the old man, thanking him for his words. He set out remembering his instructions, heading with his heart full of joy to the foot of the high mountain. When he arrived at the mountain he did indeed meet the two goddesses and felt very happy. One was very kind but her face wasn't attractive; the other didn't look so good but she had such beautiful eyelashes. Lien's body felt

[12] Here he pairs the mountains with the valleys in an antiphonal song usually not perceptible to people.

strengthened, he knew he had to control himself but he couldn't control his feelings, he couldn't control his eyes. He thought: the body is not as smart as the heart, nor the heart as intelligent as the eyes. And in this way, disobeying the advice of the old man, he chose as his wife the beautiful goddess with the vertical eyes.

Shortly after their marriage, the goddess became pregnant. Lien was very happy because he was going to have a child, but when the time came to give birth, no person was born, but three embryos in a row. From the first came a bear and a pig, from the second a monkey and a chicken, and from the third a snake and a frog. Congren Lien began to sweat all over his body, he felt nervous and scared, so he went to see the old man for advice. He said to him, "You have not listened to my words, and now the punishment is before your eyes. When the horse runs, it only thinks about arriving, not realizing that the faster it runs the easier it is to break the hoof. You're really a young man who doesn't know what's good from what's bad for yourself. Take the bear and the pig and release them in the forest, the monkey and the chicken release them in some big rock, the snake and the frog set them free in a pond." This time Congren Lien dared not refuse and followed the old man's orders to the letter.

Milidong Apu[13] was a clever and powerful god. He made many wooden dolls, some male and some female. One day he transformed himself into an old man and going out to meet Congren Lien he gave him a box with some dolls saying to him: "Soon you will be able to have a companion. Take these dolls and bring them away, but until nine months later you can't see them." Lien left with the dolls, but only three days had passed when, burning with curiosity, he opened the box to see the dolls. The dolls had eyes but they didn't see, they only blinked; they had hands but they couldn't catch things, they only clapped their hands;

[13] The first ancestor of gods and people.

they had legs but they couldn't walk, they only hit the ground with their feet. So he went to tell this story to Milidong Apu. After listening to his story, Apu was very angry, and taking the knife he had on his waist, he smashed all the dolls to pieces. Then he took some into a cave, that's why in some caves there is an echo, he took some more into the water, that's why in the water there are waves, and he brought the rest into the middle of the forest, and that's why in the forest there are four-legged beasts.

Since then Congren Lien began to wander traveling from one place to another. If he saw a snake on his way, he killed it, if it was a monkey, the same thing. His heart was full of hate, in his mouth he sang this song:

White clouds float in the sky,
raised by the white cranes,
of goodness as deep as his thought.
How can think about being kind
the crane flying lonely,
which thinks sadly of its own shadow?

Above the wide land without limits,
Where my relatives raised me,
With his deep kindness.
How can I worry about being kind,
if I wander alone and without ties
wishing to find a couple?

While he was walking, he was singing. His hand wouldn't stop rubbing its tears. Without any objective, he continued walking forward, always forward. He wandered back and forth until he reached the top of a very, very high snowy mountain. He took the leaf of a tree, put it in his mouth, and blew it gently. It sounded better and better as it blew, but the more he heard the melody the

more he felt dull. He felt so sad, that he immediately chewed the leaf in his mouth until he crushed it[14].

He came to the shore of a winding river. His water was clean and crystal clear. He approached to look, seeing his reflection he felt shocked and frightened. Well, he looked weak and thin, very ugly. He dared not look again, but took a stone and threw it furiously over the river, and then left.

Congren Lien, desperate, turned to heaven asking for a woman to marry her and recreate humanity. Shortly thereafter he reached the border between Black and White, a place so beautiful that it was difficult to describe. There was a plum tree with beautiful white flowers, between them were two that particularly attracted his gaze, as they opened one in front of the other in such a way that it seemed as if they could not separate. As he looked absorbed, he suddenly saw an extremely beautiful girl walking by, her name was Cunhong Baobaiming. Lien started sweating cold sweat, he didn't know if it would be something good. He thought to himself: how can such a beautiful woman come to this place? As he looked at her strangely and cheerfully, the girl spoke to him with sweet, tender words.

"Oriol flutters lonely, but that way of flying is not natural. Let me ask you where are you going."

"I've heard people say this is a good place." He answered, "The plums bloom twice a year, and under the trees. there's a good girl. That's why I came here to look for her."

Thus each one explained to the other his situation in a talk that was very convincing.

Cunhong Baobaiming had been promised as a wife by her father, the heavenly god Zilao Apu to the heavenly family Meilou keloukexing, in whose house there were nine siblings. Cunhong did not agree with this marriage, but she did not dare to confront

[14] The leaf is still used among the Naxi as a musical instrument.

her father openly either, hence she was very depressed. That day the weather was very clear and in the blue sky there was not a cloud. She then transformed herself into a beautiful white crane, and flew from heaven to earth, perhaps also looking for a husband, wandering back and forth until she ended up under that plum tree where she met the young Congren Lien. She considered that this encounter with Lien was very fortunate and immediately began to love him in her heart.

Thus, when it was time to leave the plum forest, Lien, hidden in the wings of the white crane, flew with her to the palace of heaven. Arriving at the home of Zilao Apu, his father, so that no one would discover the presence of his beloved, Cunhong tied Lien in the middle of a bamboo basket, hiding it at an angle behind the door.

At nightfall, when Apu returned from grazing his sheep, he brought his animals into the fold, but as the sheep were kicking and did not want to enter, he took the shepherd dog outside. But the dog turned around and barked looking at the house. Apu, angry, began to shout, "What strange thing has come into our house?" And as he said this he could be seen sharpening his knife and rubbing nervously.

Seeing his father so nervous, Cunhong asked him, "Dad, why are you sharpening your sword? Why are you rubbing it all the time? The stone where the bees have made their hive is still not hot. Bees can't move. If the lord is not cruel the slaves cannot escape. The ponds haven't dried up and the fish can't leave them." Then, realizing that his father would soon discover the presence of Congren Lien, she continued: "Oh father. The year the mountain collapsed making a crack in the ground, he did not die from the explosion that collapsed the mountain. The year the water overflowed and flooded the earth, he was not washed away by the flood perishing among the waters. He's such a capable, brave young man. I love him, so take him home with us. Father, I beg

you not to be angry. On the days when the sun shines, you can send him to dry the grain, or to watch him; on the days when it rains, you can send him to dig a ditch to drain the fields. Isn't that good for you?"

Apu couldn't stand it and asked shouting, "Well, in the end, what kind of person is he? I want to know for myself. Bring him here to my presence."

Congren Lien bathed with the water of nine rivers until she became white and clean, then rubbed his body with nine oil cakes until he became shiny and polished. Cunhong led him from his room through nine sharp bridges to the presence of his father. When Apu had him in front of him, he looked at him carefully, looking up and down at him again and again. With his eyes he moved from his feet to the man's head very slowly, letting his gaze stand for a long time with every detail of his body. In this way he scrutinized him for a long, long time. Then he said, "You. If it weren't for your fingernails and toenails, you wouldn't seem to have a drop of blood in this body. If it weren't for the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet, there wouldn't be a wrinkle on your body. Your native country, where Father Akoulu comes from, seems not to have passed on his prestige and power to his own son. You, if the water flows into the pine forest, it is sure there is no place where pine trees survive. Where weeds proliferate, there is no way for green weeds to grow. Green herbs, which will eventually wither away."

Hearing his words, Congren Lien was given the impression that the matter was not going very well, so kneeling before Zilao Apu begged him: "Apu, on earth the human beings have already disappeared, I have been the only survivor. I want life to go on, please give me your good daughter as a wife."

Apu said, "I know you're a young man with great abilities. It's okay. It's okay. It's okay. It's okay. Go cut down for me the trees of nine woods and come back."

In the evening, when Lien was with Cunhong talking about this matter, she told him how to accomplish this task, and the next morning Lien went out with nine axes that he placed in the center of the nine forests, then began to sing: "White butterflies, come and work. Black ants, come to work, Lien will also work." As a result of this, the trees of the nine forests were cut down and Lien returned to heaven very happy. When he was in front of Apu, he begged him: "I love her, give her to me."

Apu said: "You are surely very skillful but I still can't give you my daughter. Go to burn and clean up the woods where you've cut down these trees."

In the evening, when Lien told Cunhong about his father's new assignment, she secretly told him how to carry it out. And so the next morning, Lien went out with nine torches, which he placed in the center of the nine forests already cut, then he began to sing: "White butterflies, come to work. Black ants, come to work, Lien will also work." As a result of this, the nine forests were burned and Lien returned to heaven very happy. When he was in front of Apu, he begged him: "I love her, give her to me."

Apu said: "It is clear that you are very skillful, but I still cannot give you my daughter. Go to sow grain in the nine forests you just burned." And he gave him nine sacks of grain, telling him to plow the fields well, to plant them carefully, to flood them, to drain them, to take care of the buds until he had harvested them, and then to come and see him[15].

Congren Lien started the hard work, while working he was singing[16]. When he arrived at the edge of the field he began to sing:

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[15] He is describing the process of slash and burn agriculture: cutting trees, burning land, planting grain, caring for it, harvesting it. Although in historical times this primitive type of agriculture has not been described among them, it probably existed in remote times.

[16] The songs of the work are a whole literary genre of the popular literature of the Naxi. Sometimes the owner of the field where you are going to work hires a

"White butterflies, come to work. Black ants, come to work, Lien will also work." This time, however, he did not move a finger, he looked like a deer or a roe deer, huddled as he was sleeping on the edge of the field. By the time he woke up all the crops were picked up. He waited until the grain was ripe, and then shouldered the nine sacks of grain he had just collected. When he returned home, before he could open his mouth, Apu said to him: "You lack three grains, two that are in the belly of the turtledove and one that is in the belly of the ant. Handy boy, find a way to bring them to me."

The next morning a turtledove flew to rest on a tree in the garden of the Apu house. At that moment Cunhong was sewing. When she saw the turtledove, she called Lien right away. When he saw her he prepared his bow and placed an arrow with the aim to shoot and kill the bird, but when he had it tensed, he looked and looked, pointed and aimed, without letting the arrow come out. Seeing him act in such a manner Cunhong felt very worried, so taking the frame on which she was knitting, she tapped him lightly in the hand. The arrow shot out and stuck right in the chest of the turtledove, so they could recover two of the lost grains. It is said that since then the breast of the turtledove has a mark, by the arrow that hurt it on that occasion.

Feeling very happy Congren Lien then went to raise a large stone under which there were many ants, which at one point began to riot. Among them was one with a large bulge at the waist. Lien used a hair from the ponytail to tie it to its waist, then he pressed a little and the lost grain came out. It is said that if ants have such a thin waist, it is because of that occasion when Lien pushed them. Lien took the three grains and gave them to Apu saying, "I love her. Give her to me." Apu said, "You're probably very skillful, but

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professional singer who directs the song. People sing while they work and if at the end of the day the song is not finished, they will continue in the home of one of them before the fire of the home.

I still can't give you my daughter. Tonight the two of us are going out to the mountain to hunt mountain goats."

Lien, satisfied, told this event to Cunhong, who said to him: "You must be careful, when he tells you to catch a goat, he certainly wants to turn you into a dead goat." And so she taught her beloved a remedy.

At night the two of them went out to hunt goats. Upon reaching the back of the peak, Apu said he was very tired and proposed to Lien to sleep together in a mountain hole, Apu on the inside, and Lien on the outside. Apu had planned to wait for Lien to fall asleep and kick him down the mountain, but as much as he expected Lien was still awake and it was he who fell asleep. Then Lien rose quietly, wrapped a large stone in his blanket, placed it beside the foot of Apu, and silently walked away and returned to Cunhong. In the middle of his dreams Apu kicked hard, causing the great stone to fall to the precipice, which just went to fall on the head of a goat. The next day, before the rooster crowed, Lien returned to the mountain to see what had happened, discovering a dead goat at the bottom of the cliff, which he carried on his shoulder and took home.

When Apu woke up he went back home; but while Congren Lien had taken the most direct route Apu made some turns, so that when he arrived Lien was already waiting for him: "The goat meat is already hanging in the kitchen, be kind enough to prepare appetizers for Apu's dinner, be kind enough to make his wife Azi's breakfast. I want your daughter, give her to me." Apu said, "I can't give it to you yet."

A few days later, when he had finished eating the goat meat, Zilao Apu went to look for Congren Lien and said: "You are very clever and very skillful. Tonight we're going fishing in the river." Lien agreed and then told Cunhong, who said, "Be careful. Whenever you're going to catch a fish for sure it's because he

wants to turn you into a dead fish." And then she taught him the remedy to avoid it.

That night, Apu and Lien went fishing. When they reached the bank of the river Apu said he was tired, asking Lien to sleep with him on the bank of the river. Apu prepared to sleep with his head facing the shore, leaving Lien with his head facing the river. Apu had planned to wait for Lien to fall asleep to kick him and throw him into the river. By the third hour, Lien had not yet fallen asleep and it was Apu who fell asleep. Lien then rose quietly, wrapped a large rock in his robe, which he placed beside the foot of Apu, and then sneaked back to Cunhong. In the middle of his dreams, Apu kicked the stone, which fell into the river hitting right on the head of a carp. The next day, before the rooster crowed, Lien approached the river to see what had happened and discovered that in the surface of the river floated a dead carp, which he picked up and took home[17].

When Apu woke up he also went home, but as he took a longer road than Lien, when he arrived he found him at the door saying: "The fish is already in the jar, be kind enough to make Apu's food, be kind enough to make Azi's soup. I want her, give her to me."

Apu said, "You're very clever and very skillful. Do you really want to marry my daughter? Go get three drops of tigress milk, that will prove that you're really smart and skillful and then I'll marry my daughter to you."

After listening to him, Congren Lien began to sweat nervously. Then he said to Zilao Apu: "It doesn't matter what rope you tie, it's all the man who braids them, and he braids them very tightly: but how can I braid that rope? No matter what the matter is, all have been done by man, and very well done, but how can I resolve

[17] Now he has proven his ability with hunting and fishing, activities that complement agriculture in the economy of the Naxi.

this matter?" Lien was angry and afflicted and had not discussed the matter with Cunhong, so he ran straight to a field, where he collected three drops of wild cat milk and returned to the palace to give it to Apu. He thought that the milk of all animals was equally white and there would be no way to tell the difference, but Apu knew a way. He placed the milk in the stable of the yaks and the bulls, and they did not even move; he then placed it in the stable of the horses and the cows, which were not excited at all either. Finally, he placed it in the chicken pen, which immediately became rowdy and noisy and began to jump from one side to the other. Apu shouted angrily, "What do you mean, is this tiger's milk? Hey, young man, you still have to worry about being a little honest and not studying how to deceive people."

In the evening, when Cunhong heard about the matter, she came to console him and gave him a piece of advice: "Tomorrow morning, go to the high gorges. On the southern slope there is a tigress foraging for food, its cubs are sleeping on the northern slope. You have to take advantage of that occasion, kill a puppy with a stone, then you must remove the skin and put it on your body[18]. You must wait until it is time to eat, and when the tigress feeds the cubs again, you must imitate all their movements. If you see the little tigers take three jumps, you also give them; if they roar three times, you do the same; then the tigress will lie down on the ground and turn around to feed the puppies, and you will be able to get three drops of her milk.

At that juncture between life and death, Congren Lien felt a very heavy mood. Seeing him so depressed, Cunhong said to him, "In that place between black and white, three wise words have been spoken, is it not difficult for you to forget them? You have to

[18] Although the myth does not make much emphasis, it is possible that the archaic shamans of China's Shang dynasty dressed in tiger skin for their ceremonies and shamanic journeys, wearing tiger skin is therefore, to experience a transformation.

trust yourself, and you have to trust me, too. As the proverb says: "The impossible, tears, in doing so, joy." You've already suffered so many penalties that this will be the last, it's hard to think you won't believe me." On hearing it, Lien burst into tears.

The next morning Lien left for the high gorges. Following the method that Cunhong had shown him, he obtained the three drops of tiger milk. At noon he returned home and handed them to Apu, who tested them again meticulously, putting them first in the hen pen, which remained as quiet as usual. Then he put them where the cows and horses, which began to move restlessly. He finally took them to the yaks and the bulls, who started jumping nervously. Then Apu smiled and said, "This is real tigress milk.[19]"

That same night Apu and Azi were discussing the fate of their daughter. Azi kept saying, "Cunhong is our daughter, but Lien is not as good as her. Is there a way to make them separate?"

Apu was not yet fully satisfied, so the next day he said to Congren Lien: "You are naturally clever and skillful, but who are your ancestors on the father's and mother's side?"

Lien said: "I am a descendant of the nine gods that opened the sky and of the seven goddesses that separated the earth; I descend from the one that can cross the 99 mountains without tiring, and from the one that can cross the 77 valleys without exhausting itself; I am a descendant of the strong god Jiugao Nata; I descend from the one that can eat the mountain Baoshan without filling up, and from the one that can drink nine rivers without satiating itself; I descend from the one that will never be subdued and no one can kill; I descend from the one that can resist knives and poisons[20]. I

[19] This new proof, in which the tiger is present, suggests a realization with the spiritual and psychological transformations that this animal presides.

[20] Again we see the symbolism of the number nine with the masculine aspect, the mountains and the sky, and the number seven with the feminine, the valleys and the earth.

am the one his enemies have wanted to exterminate, but despite everything, I still live. Apu, Apu. I love her. Give her to me.[21]"

When Congren Lien finished speaking Zilao Apu didn't know what to say. Then he even asked, "Naturally you want to marry my daughter. What gifts have you brought?"

Congren Lien said to him: "The sky is high and like a mantle covers the stars, the earth is great, herbs grow everywhere. Such a long way, how can I bring goats from earth to heaven? How can I carry gold, silver, or other treasures? These days, I've cut down a forest for you, I've burned it for you, I've harvested a cereal crop. I have accompanied you to the cliffs to hunt goats and I almost became a stone goat; I have gone with you to fish on the river bank and almost became a dead fish; I have gone to the dark side to skin a little tiger, and to the light side to take its mother's milk being about to be devoured by the tiger. All that fear is more precious than herds of goats and piles of gold and silver. How can you think you can't consider a wedding gift? Apu, Apu. I want her. Give her to me!"

After listening to him Apu did not know what to say, and also his opinion about Lien finally changed, so he agreed to give his daughter[22].

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21 The mythical genealogy of Congren Lien, much more convincing than this summary is reflected in He Baolin's article in *Research in Naxi Dongba culture*, p. 359.

22 This part of the myth reflects the freedom of traditional marriage between the Naxi, because if even the god of heaven must accept that his daughter marry the couple she chooses, so must do the others. This freedom was attempted to break in the Lijiang region after the inclusion of the region in the Chinese administration causing a wave of suicides that lasted until the twentieth century. Other scholars affirm that this is also the first marriage as such between the Naxi, the first between a man and a woman, and before this union there existed a type of free temporary unions similar to those of the *Axia* marriage of the Moso. This is implicit in this myth, where every night Congren Lien meets Cunhong Baobai.

Clouds fill the sky
The white crane is going to take off
But he hasn't spread his wings yet.
On the thick forests of the high plateaus
The tiger wants to start moving.
But he hasn't been encouraged with his dignity yet.
In the village of heaven
In the great land where humanity lives
There's a couple who want to go on a trip.
But the man still doesn't have his sword.
And the woman hasn't dressed up yet.

One day, Cunhong saw a bright red tiger but did not dare to kill him, but when she came back she told Lien. A few days later, Lien hunted the tiger and the two were very happy. When they removed its skin, they thought about what to do with it and saw that they could do so many things. Tiger-skin clothes gave a powerful air. The tiger skin tunic was soft and showy, the tiger skin cap, the belt, the quiver for the arrows; all the man's clothes were made with the tiger skin, leaving nothing for women's clothes[23].

Time passed very quickly, autumn soon arrived, the goats from the plateaus descended to the meadows next to the rivers. Cunhong was such a skillful woman that in no matter was she left behind the man. She cut the wool of many goats and wove several

[23] Among the many aspects of the tiger's symbolism is that of being the clothing or the seat of royalty. This paragraph somehow invests Congren Lien with power, as the first ancestor, and at the same time specifies that power is not shared by his wife Cunhong Baobai, suggesting a time when that power was shared. To learn more about the symbolism of the tiger see my book *The Tiger in China: Image and Symbol.*

garments: blankets, bedspreads, hats, belts. That's how she prepared everything and didn't need her parents' dowry.

But in the end, she was the flesh of their flesh and knowing that they wanted to go down into the world, Apu and Azi gave her a rich dowry: nine horses to ride and nine horses to carry; seven pairs of oxen, nine bowls of silver and seven bowls of gold; nine types of seeds and seven types of animals, and much more[24].

But among the seven types of animals, they were not given the cat. The skillful Lien stole a cat hiding it in his lap and took it home. Then when Zilao Apu saw that there were also cats on earth, he became very angry and cursed him: "I order that after the arrival of the cat to the world, it emits a noise from its lungs, and its meat cannot be eaten. Thus, until today the cat is not considered a domestic animal and its meat is not eaten, and that noise is emitted by the curse of Apu.

He gave them the nine kinds of seeds, but he didn't give them the turnip seed. Clever Cunhong stole some turnip seed and hid it in the crevice of his nail, taking it home. Apu knew it from heaven and was very angry cursing her: "When the turnip reaches the world, it cannot be edible, and also I want to cook it to become water. That's why the turnip can only be made as a vegetable and it's very easy to melt it in the water when it's cooked.

When Lien and Cunhong finally moved from heaven to earth, they had not brought any dog and the distinction between owner and guest was not very good; then they went to bring a dog and the difference between owner and guest was established. In the beginning they had not brought any rooster either, and they did not distinguish clearly the day from the night; then they brought a rooster and there was a clear distinction between day and night. They used a greased bucket to bring the water, getting the clear

[24] As in other similar myths the goddess brings agriculture and livestock to the land.

water to fill their cistern; they took cypress wood chips to make torches, getting a light that illuminated everything.

They looked for an auspicious day to complete their move. They woke up very early that day. Before dawn they said goodbye to their parents and from the Palace of Heaven they descended to earth. They walked day after day, and on the third day a white wind rose on their left, and a black wind on their right. The mad wind curled in the black clouds and from the clouds fell a heavy rain. Large hailstones fell in the rain. In a moment a tremendous roar spread over the mountains and a great flood spread over the earth leaving neither path nor bridge to cross.

What happened was that as Cunhong Baobai had originally been promised by her parents to the house of Meilou keluokexing, and she had not wanted to marry him, but to her beloved Congren Lien, her former boyfriend did not resign himself and used all the powers of his family, ice and hail, to stop her advance as revenge. This being so, what remedy was there? Cunhong took three cakes of butter, three kilos of flour and three sacks of cypress leaves, and at the top of the mountain she burned them as an offering to heaven, representing his gratitude to Meilou keloukexing. Shortly thereafter the black clouds were disappearing and a red sun warmed and illuminated their bodies. There was a road to walk and a bridge to cross. So neither the wailing wind nor the water flowing through the rivers could stop the couple from advancing.

Lien's wife was very happy to have gone down into the mortal world, if she walked one step, she would jump three. From that day on they joined their destinies, wanted to live together, sing together. A single heart that would never separate.

It is not known how many roads they walked, nor how many mountains they crossed. How many valleys they crossed, how many rivers they crossed. At last the two arrived at the famous place of Yinggudi, where they erected the victory table. Nailing the victory pole the man carried a white banner, and the woman lit a

furious fire, boiled tea and made food, and began a happy life in freedom. They brought the herds of horses, cows and goats to graze in the meadows and planted the nine seeds in the valleys. They worked it and they enjoyed it, they milked the milk they drank without knowing the pain or the sorrow.

Shortly thereafter Cunhong had good news and from the same birth she had three children. But the children were three years old and still couldn't speak. The parents were very worried about it and didn't know what to do. Then they sent the bat Jingbai Jinglu to ask Zilao Apu why the children did not speak. And they told the yellow dog to bark night and day without stopping, so that Apu could hear it and know that something have happened.

The bat flew to Zilao Apu's house explaining what was going on. After listening to him Apu not only did not tell him any reason, but he began to insult it in anger. When it returned to earth, the bat told them what had happened: "Apu is angry with you. He said "drink water and don't forget the one who dug the well, eat and don't forget the one who planted the crops. You two look like birds making a nest. Busy from one place to other you have not remembered your parents again."

The couple was thinking and thinking, and they went to see the great Dongba Jiubu Tongzhi, to know which days were auspicious[25], then they invited him to cut a large branch of a chestnut and another of a poplar, sacrifice a yellow ox, and use a large rooster, rice and wine to perform an important ceremony in honor of heaven. To thank first her parents, Apu and Azi; and secondly the Miluo keloukexing family for all their grants.

[25] Because of their religious knowledge, the Dongba priests have the mission of indicating which days are appropriate for each activity.

From then on, honoring heaven became a Naxi custom. A custom that began with Congren Lien and has been passed down from one generation to the next, until today[26].

One morning, when Lien's three sons were playing in the turnip field at the door of the house, they suddenly saw a horse running to eat the turnips. The three boys at the same time feel worried and shout, which became three types of languages. A single mother had three children who gave rise to three peoples, just like the three aromas that come out of a bottle of wine[27]. They wore three different kinds of clothes. They rode three different kinds of horses. Going to live in three different places.

The oldest gave rise to the Tibetans, the second gave rise to the Naxi, and the third to the Bai[28]. Later they spread like the stars that fill the sky, like the green grasses that cover the fields, like the hairs that grow on the manes of horses, like the turnips sown in the field. The water in their wells was full, and all the news they received was good news. Wishing their descendants to stand out shining and flourishing forever.

Notes

This is the most important myth of the Naxi, the one that explains the creation of the world and of the humanity, as well as the origin of their first ancestor Congren Lien and after him, of all

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[26] It is precisely in these ceremonies of veneration of the sky that this myth is told every year, in addition to some other ceremonies of the Dongbas. Anyone who wants to know this ceremony in detail should read *The Muan Bpo ceremony or the sacrifice to heaven as practiced by the Na-khi*, by J. F. Rock.

[27] Zamblera draws attention to this comparison, precisely with wine, and the traditional distillation system of the Naxi, which implies a sense of the higher quality of the wine obtained in the first distillation and a lower quality of that obtained in subsequent distillations.

[28] A minority living in Dali Prefecture, south of Lijiang, who have always had a close relationship with the Naxi.

the Naxi. The divine origin of the Naxi is established in this myth. Some scholars consider that it was especially important for the Mu kings, as it made their genealogy go back to the gods of heaven. Of the many ceremonies in which it was recited the most important was the Sacrifice to Heaven, through which the heads of each clan re-established their heavenly ties.

The present version is based on the one published by Ma Changyi, in *Tales from Chinese Mythology*, which is based on He Zhiwu's version of the oral scriptures of the Dongba. It is the most popular version, also included in other Chinese anthologies of minority mythologies. In making the English translation, I have taken into account the French translation of another version of He Zhiwu, published under the title *La Migration.*

Lin Xiangxiao proposes the division of myth into 20 chapters. He also assures that there are versions both in Dongba writing and transmitted orally and preserved in folklore, even in areas where there is no writing, being the content of oral versions and written versions very similar, although with some interesting differences, such as that in oral versions the end does not have the religious color of the written ones, which shows that in its origin this myth was narrated orally, being adapting later to the rituals of the Dongba religion.

Zamblera recalls that this creation story is above all a Dongba text, i.e. a ritual text intended to be read throughout rituals and religious ceremonies, which includes a series of magical formulas, most of which have disappeared in popular translations, through which the creation of the world is revived and repeated by creating all good things again, and controlling bad or negative things.

The war of Dong and Shu[29]

In very ancient times, when heaven and earth had not yet separated, when the sun and moon had not yet risen, when the multitude of stars had not yet appeared in the firmament, when water and its channels had not yet taken shape, when forests and rocky places had not yet arisen. In those remote times when the great mountain Junaruoluo[30] had not yet been formed, there was neither the great Heyibada tree, nor the great Zengzenghailu stone, nor the great Milidaji sea. At that time the house of Dong and the house of Shu had not yet appeared, nobles and plebeians had not yet differentiated, dragon kings[31] and fish had not yet emerged. Between the house of Dong and the house of Shu enmity and war had not yet taken place, the death and liberation of the souls from purgatory had not yet appeared, disputes and calamities had not arisen, silver ingots and gold bars had not differentiated, and the separation between the clans and their enemies had not arisen.

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[29] Also called *The War Between Black and White*.

[30] Once again we are presented with the mythical geography of the Naxi. Junaruoluo Mountain is the *axis mundi*, the dwelling place of the gods and communication between heaven and earth. The sacred tree Heyibada is the place where the three Gods of Victory rest: the Great Rocho, the Lion and the Flying Dragon. The sea Milidaji, was the first sea that humanity saw, it is inhabited by the Golden Frog.

[31] He insists on the differentiation between nobles and plebeians, since dragon kings rule the waters.

Above a murmur first arose, below the whistling of an expiration. The murmur and the expiration underwent different transformations emerging a white egg, which in turn underwent new transformations emerging the five powerful spirits[32], which in turn were transformed giving rise to the five winds: white, green, red, yellow and black. The winds of these five colors transformed themselves into five colored eggs.

The white egg became the white sky and the white earth of the Pan clan[33], its white sun and moon, its white stars, its white valleys and mountains, its white trees and stones, its white *pian*[34] and yaks, goats and lambs, oxen and horses. The Pan clan had nine sons who built nine villages and raised nine daughters who founded nine villages. The white egg was transformed again and the white sky and the white earth of Dan's clan emerged[35], his whole world was equally white. Its nine sons built nine villages and its nine daughters founded nine more. A new transformation of the white egg led to the emergence of the white sky and the white earth of the Heng clan[36], with its equally white world, in which its nine sons built nine villages and its nine daughters founded other nine. From a fourth transformation of the white egg was born Meiling Dongzhu and the white sky and white earth of the Dong clan, with all its white world. The next morning the Golden Mother who lived in the Green Jade Sea fell in love with Meiling Dongzhu forming a family. The Heng clan had nine sons who built nine villages and raised nine daughters who also founded nine villages.

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[32] It refers to the five elements: wood, fire, metal, water, and earth. Each one is also associated with a color, and one of the addresses and the center.

[33] It refers to the Tibetan deity Panji, N. of T Chinese. Therefore to the Tibetans.

[34] A crossing of Yak and cow.

[35] A deity of the Bai. And the Bai

[36] A Naxi deity. And the Naxi

The green egg was also transformed and the green sky and green earth of the Dragon King's house emerged, with a completely green world, in which his nine sons built nine villages and his nine daughters founded nine more. The yellow egg was also transformed and the yellow sky and yellow earth of the Spirits of Dispute emerged, and their all-yellow world in which their nine sons built nine villages and their nine daughters founded nine more. The red egg was also transformed with the emergence of the red sky and the red earth of the Poisonous Spirits, with their world all red, in which their nine sons built nine villages and their nine daughters founded nine more. At the end, the black egg was transformed and Meiling Shuzhu was born, the black sky and black earth of the Shu Spirits emerged. Their world is completely black, with its black sun and moon, its black stars, its black valleys and mountains, its black trees and stones, its black *pian* and yaks, goats and lambs, oxen and horses. The Shu Spirit clan had nine sons who built nine villages and raised nine daughters who founded nine more[37].

In the next generation, the Heng clan went to the place of the Heng deities, the demons to the territory of the demons, the Dong clan to their territory, and the Shu demons to their own domain. In the world there had not yet been disputes and disasters. Above arose a sound, below an expiration, sound and air mixed, transforming into white clouds and a white wind, which were transformed into a drop of white dew, which was transformed into the great ocean of Milidaji, on whose shores the great Heyibada tree grew. The spirits wanted to cut down this tree, but the god Heng cared for him; the Shu spirits also wanted to cut down the tree, but the Dong tribe rubbed it with the medicine of immortality.

[37] Note that in this genealogy of the two clans whose war this myth describes already shows the white world of the Dong as a result of purity and the black world of the Shu as that of poison, dispute and evil.

The Shu spirits tried to cut it secretly at night, but the Dong stood guard day and night. Meiling Dongzhu was the first to discover that the flowers of this tree were made of gold and silver and its jade fruits and pearls. With that tree that the Dong had first seen, the disputes between the Dong and the Shu began. They fought for silver and gold and this is how disputes and misfortunes arose in the world.

In the great mountain Junaruoluo there was a sea called Daolaojiuchu on which lived a pair of goldfish. One day when the fish were playing with a golden egg, one of them bit it from the top and the other fought to take it off and play with it. From then on, the fish started arguing about eating and drinking[38]. The war between Dong and Shu started this way.

The sun turns to the left around the great mountain Junaruoluo and the moon surrounds it to the right. Both stars meet on the mountain on New Year's Eve, separating again at the dawn of the first day of the year. Here it is counted that every month has thirty days. Twelve leaves and twelve branches grew upon the great Heyibada tree, and twelve flowers arose, from which the twelve earthly branches[39] and the twelve months of the cycle of yin and yang originated. To determine time: years, months, days and hours, also fought. The war between Dong and Shu started in this way.

Meiling Dongzhu lived in Jumulinzi village, one of nine white stone villages built on the Dong white territory. Meiling Shuzhu lived in the Nizekougong village of the Shu spirits, one of nine black stone villages built on their black territory. On the border between black and white, on the border between the territory of Dong and that of Shu the white and the black did not touch and

[38] Arguing about anything.

[39] It must refer to the ancient calendar system similar to the Chinese, with Ten Heavenly Trunks and Twelve Earthly Branches.

even the birds that flew did not mix. To be sure that always will be so, the Dong's white sun sent the brave pig to watch, but the black rat of the Shu made its burrow by secretly piercing the mountain, so that the brilliant rays of the Dong would pierce the hole she made illuminating the black world of the Shu spirits.

Communication had already opened and the inhabitants of the black kingdom of Shu discovered the existence of light in the world of the Dong. This was the reason why there was a day when Ansheng Miwu, the son of the great chief Meiling Shuzhu, went up from below. That same day Dongzi Alu, the son of the great chief Meiling Dongzhu, went down from above, the two meeting in the ancient city of Meiduo. When the two young men met they took off their white tunics and placed them on the ground, and with the dice of the conch they played to bet money. The honest Dongzi Alu lost the bet and the clever Ansheng Miwu won again and again. Then he asked Dongzi Alu:

"Where did that white sky and earth of the Dong, that white sun and moon, the white mountains and the white valleys come from?"

Dongzi Alu replied, "The sky and the white earth, the sun, the moon, the mountains and valleys so white, everything was created by my ability."

Ansheng went on to say: "In our place the sky and the earth are black, as are the sun, the moon, the mountains, and valleys. Please come to the place of the Shu to create a white sky and a white earth, a sun and a moon, mountains and valleys all white. If you manage to do that for us you will be able to live a long time in the world of the Shu, marry the most beautiful girl, and also receive an innumerable amount of gold, silver and other treasures." Dongzi Alu agreed.

When Dongzi Alu returned home he told his parents what had happened and asked for their help. His father Meiling Dongzhu warned him: "When a child does not obey, he may stumble upon a

stone, if a boy comes out too much, he may encounter misfortunes, foxes run everywhere, wishing to deceive him."

The Golden Mother Zizao also advised him: "My son Alu, on his head has the wrinkles of evil spirits, on his hands also carries his mark, as well as on both feet. Could you never absolutely return to the world of the Shu?"

Alu answered them, saying, "A man cannot repent of the words which he has spoken. The tiger can't return the meat he already chews in his mouth."

Meiling Dongzhu then recommended: "My dear son Alu. Are you sure you're going to Shu's country? The tribe of Heng and the tribe of the spirits are totally different, as are the land of Dong and the land of Shu. You have to make the sky of Shu inclined and the earth curved, starting from the place where you fall without worrying about anything else."

Dongzi Alu came to the place of the Shu demons and started creating problems everywhere. At midnight, without being discovered by the dogs that guarded his houses, he took with him innumerable treasures of gold and silver, with which he returned excited. When he reached the border between black and white, he installed a copper-iron frame with sharp spikes and went home.

When the second part of the night arrived, Ansheng Miwu discovered that Alu had escaped by taking away innumerable treasures, so he gathered his dogs and immediately went out in pursuit. They chased him furiously until they reached the border between black and white, where they were all killed by the sharp spikes of copper and iron that Dongzi Alu had placed.

That night Meiling Dongzhu had three beautiful dreams. At dawn the next day Dongzi Alu went to see how the trap was, discovering that Ansheng Miwu and all his dogs had been killed by the spikes. He told his father the news, and Meiling Dongzhu then used Ansheng Miwu's head to honor the spirits of victory, and carrying the blood from his chest he blackened it by making a

medicine for the god of victory, and with the bones of the enemy he made a horn of victory.

Not many days had passed when Meiling Dongzhu still did not regain his joy. So he took the body of Ansheng Miwu and buried it under the ground, digging over it a ditch that filled with water, spreading a layer of wheat bran over the water. Meiling Dongzhu then led all the people to dig ditches, as well as the white wind eagle and the black raven. But the raven was not good at digging ditches, always attentive to the smoke and the smell of blood, so that at dusk the raven spun around in an earthen ditch and flew off in shock:

"They want me the crow to dig a ditch
Let him dig a straight and deep ditch,
And I almost died of tiredness,
So tired I can't wash the mud off my legs.
The white eagle has dug a ditch,
But he hasn't dug it well either,
Well, his thing is to flit in space breathing the wind,
And when he's gone by the river to wash his paws.
He's left them pretty white."

Meiling Dongzhu, sincere and in good faith, brought a cane. To badly beat the white eagle, the one he sent out. Since then the eagle began to flutter in the middle of the space absorbing the wind.

The innocent eagle after suffering this injustice felt indignant and said: "I hate as enemies the members of this clan! Let your wheat be mixed with weeds." Then the eagle flew into the territory of the Shu spirits and said to its three chiefs: Mima Shengdeng, Kendu Dangyou, and Anri Zhuobu: "This Ansheng Miwu of your house has been killed by the people of Dong. His body looks like that of a rat, for it has been buried under the ground. Ditches were

dug over the earth and filled with water, and water was stretched out with wheat."

When the news came home, Father Meiling Shuzhu began to cry, mother Genshao Namu, and the three chiefs also cried. Since then, Meiling Shuzhu had a black heart and always sad entrails, full of grief and indignation said: "I have nine competent sons and seven intelligent daughters, but none of them have his ingenuity and courage. Ah. Even if one day I meet a thousand people, my beloved son will not be among them; even if one night I meet a hundred people, I will not be able to meet my beloved son."

His parents spent days without wishing to eat or drink. Then the three Shu chiefs, high-ranking officials and common people met to discuss the response to the aggression and decided to mobilize a powerful army to attack the Dong land, capture Dongzi Alu and kill him. "Your family's hatred will be avenged on your enemy's body, as if thousands of butterflies landed on a tree by the water."

Meiling Shuzhu's heart felt cheerful like a cypress blooming from the water, hatred came out of his heart like a flower. Shu's generals and soldiers prepared themselves, cut three fir forests to make thousands of lances, three bamboo iron forests to make thousands of bamboo armors, killed thousands of yaks to make thousands of magnificent bows with their horns and ropes with their skin. Shu Tiluo blacksmith, born with a pig's head,[40] made arrowheads and spearheads, galvanized iron helmets, as well as swords and knives for war. He killed a big black rooster to make with his feathers those of the arrows. The Shu chief Mima Shengdeng commanded thousands of soldiers, as numerous as the stars of the sky, as the grasses of the earth, which moved like bees around their nest, who went covering the earth to attack Dong's unjust house.

[40] It must refer to the Tiluo spirits, which have heads of different animals.

Meanwhile, Meiling Dongzhu felt nervous during the day and had nightmares at night. "Last night I dreamed that the Dong villages were prey to fire." He said to his wife. "I also had a bad dream, during which our villages were flooded, and the great black Shu bull climbed to the top of a cliff and rubbed his horns preparing for the fight. Nightmares were a bad omen. In the heart of Meiling Dongzhu doubts arose, so he sent the fast white wind to investigate how things were in the lands of Shu. The black wind of the Shu discovered the white wind and chased it back into Dong territory, and the white wind informed Meiling Dongzhu: "There are thousands of Shu soldiers ready, the arrows of their maneuvers look like bees, those maneuvering with their spears look like snakes. Quickly, raise an army among the Dong!"

To get a clearer idea of the situation Meiling Dongzhu sent the sage with the sharpest eyesight to investigate, but as Shu's poisonous demons did not stop watching him, he thought it would be better to return to Dong's lands. He then sent the golden bees to investigate, yet their tongues were cut off by the Shu spirits. He still sent the sharp-eyed white eagle to investigate, which was chased back by the black eagle of the Shu.

The next day Meiling Dongzhu met with the Golden Mother and said to her: "Before the multitudinous army of Shu arrives I want to take advantage to return for a moment to the kingdom of heaven. Dongzi Alu, your maternal uncle is in the kingdom of the sea, hidden at the bottom of the sea. The thousands of Dong soldiers must hide in the mountains and valleys, all the riches and treasures must be hidden in mountain caves."

Golden Mother Zizao replied, "The ninety-nine disasters that happen in the world have never been able to cause a calamity to women; the seventy-seven enemies on earth have never been able to become enemies of women. The women's house cannot be killed, so you must allow me to go defend the house and guard the village door."

Three days and three nights later, the generals Anyue Zhuobu, wielding a sword in his hand, Kengdu Dangyou carrying a large spear, and Mima Shengdeng with a trident arrived heading thousands of Shu soldiers, thousands of other poisonous spirits and spirits of war came with them. Cranes and black eagles flew over the sky. Tigers and black leopards were running around the mountains. The lands and mountains of the Dong were completely covered by Shu's soldiers.

But when Shu's soldiers arrived in Dong's lands they found no person, not even a horse. Shu's officers then began to torture The Golden Mother Zizao, some pulling her and others beating her, it seemed that they were going to swallow her with one bite. So many mouths asking, "Where's Meiling Dongzhu? Where's Dongzi Alu? Where's the Dong army?"

The Golden Mother pretended to be a madwoman and only "yiyi huhu" could be heard from her mouth. If she stared at the sea, all the Shu soldiers ran to the seashore, but there they found nothing. If her forehead pointed to the high mountain all the soldiers ran to the cliffs and peaks, but there they found nothing either. Shu's officers twirled nervously, rubbed their hands, and kicked without finding a remedy.

Then Maida Goumu, one woman of Shu, had a great idea which she presented to the chiefs: "Brave young people like beautiful girls. Smart hunting dogs like to chase fat deer. I see that the officers have no way of capturing Dongzi Alu, so I propose that absolutely all soldiers return. I'll be able to get Alu to come." After listening to her, they thought her words were reasonable, therefore all Shu's soldiers and generals returned to their world, without a single one remaining in Dong lands.

The only woman left was Maida Goumu, who, putting her plan into practice, reached the seashore wearing a white blouse like silver and a skirt with green folds like jade, fastened with a golden

belt. There she began to play a pleasant melody with his golden bamboo birimbao[41], which she accompanied singing:

"A good girl with a good heart has her feeling for her brother[42], but the brother's heart is so hard that it does not let him settle in it. The good-hearted hunting dog puts all its feeling in the deer, but the deer's heart is so hard that it doesn't even remember the hunter. My heart loves brother Dongzi Alu. All of Shu's soldiers have returned, not a man or a horse has been left behind."

Dongzi Alu's spirit was transformed. He became a white eagle[43] with sharp eyesight, and flying into Dong territory he fluttered three times, and although he saw that there was not a Shu soldier or horse left, he still did not calm down and went back to hiding in the middle of the sea.

Maida Goumu, elegantly dressed, returned to the seashore, carrying with her the exciting birimbao. But since she was dirty she did as if washing her hands, showing her breasts on purpose. Dongzi Alu's spirit was transformed into a fierce red tiger that jumped into the mountain. Shu's spirit was also transformed into a black tiger that also jumped across the mountain. The two tigers played chasing each other jumping through valleys and mountains, without seeing a soldier or a Shu horse. But Dongzi Alu was still not calm and when they finished playing he hid in the middle of the sea again.

Maida Goumu returned once again to the shore of the sea initiating a tragic tune with her birimbao. After a while, she pretended to feel tired and went to wash her feet discovering her legs on purpose. Dongzi Alu's spirit was transformed again, this time into a male yak that began to run across the meadow. The

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41 A kind of mouth harp used by young Naxi especially in romantic encounters

42 It does not refer to the blood brother, but is a colloquial way of calling the lover in Chinese, the language from which we translate this myth.

43 It seems to describe an episode of shamanic flight, reminiscent of the one described visually in John Boorman's film *The Emerald Jungle*.

woman's spirit was also transformed into a black yak, which followed him across the prairie. The two yaks rubbed their horns playing in the middle of the meadow, seeing that there was neither a Shu soldier nor horse.

The two of them started talking about love when the sun rose and did not realize that the star was setting behind the mountains of the West; they fell asleep before the rooster returned to their pen, without their morning song waking them up. Then Maida Goumu said to Alu:

"We two, like those stars that always shine in the sky, like the herbs that continually spring from the earth, in this world we will have to seek our means of subsistence, we will have to take care of livestock, I do not want to live in this world of men. I have heard that below there is a place whose sky is made of jade stones and the ground of gold tiles, above, the trees grow silver flowers to which the chickens bite, and from the stones arise gold flowers to which dogs bark. Let us live together there!"

To which Dongzi Alu replied: "My family has nine Dongba masters who are experts in scriptures and spells, and seven shamans with extraordinary magical powers. And no one has ever heard of such a wonderful place."

Alu was following Shu's girl, Maida Goumu's spirit was transformed, surely she was going to a good place. A place with a clear blue sky and a bright yellow earth, where the trees had silver flowers and the rocks gold flowers, where golden dogs barked and silver roosters chirped. Dongzi Alu said excitedly: "The truth is it's a good place, it's really very cheerful."

Maida Goumu replied, "There's still a good place downstairs. Deer have silver horns, mules have gold manes!" Dongzi Alu replied: "In my family since the time of my ancestors, wise men with great knowledge have emerged, but I never heard of deer growing silver horns or mules growing golden manes. Alu's mood was still with his doubts, almost without realizing it was taken by

the girl Shu to another place, then his spirit was transformed again, and in that place the deer had silver horns that shone luminously and the mules had golden manes that shone brilliantly; there the deer jumped and the mules ran. Alu said confidently: "It's really a good place, it's certainly a very cheerful garden."

Maida Goumu then said, "There's an even better place downstairs. Where trees can walk and stones can speak[44]." Dongzi Alu replied: "For generations in my family, wise and intelligent men appeared, but I never heard of a place where trees could walk and stones could speak. Alu's heart still felt a certain fear, but while he doubted what to do he was taken by the girl from Shu to another place, where her spirit was transformed and indeed the trees could walk and the stones could speak. Alu said to himself confidently: "It's really a good place, it's certainly a very cheerful garden."

Thus, almost without realizing it, Dongzi Alu had already been taken by Shu's girl to the border between black and white. The white wind of the Dong still did not know when the black wind of the Shu came from scouting and immediately informed the Shu generals: "Dongzi Alu has already been brought to the border between black and white, the Shu must send troops quickly. Quickly, go and catch Dongzi Alu!" Meiling Shuzhu and his three chiefs deliberated on the importance of this news and immediately prepared a large army which they immediately set in motion, so that in a moment a multitude of Shu soldiers covering heaven and earth went to the border between black and white.

Maida Goumu, knowing what was coming, consoled Alu and said: "Even if a great thunder sounds, it is not certain that a great rain will fall, when great misfortunes appear, they can be easily solved.

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[44] According to his creation myth at the beginning of time trees could walk and stones could talk.

Soon Shu's soldiers arrived. Dongzi Alu was captured without resistance. Immediately they placed iron handcuffs on his hands and shackles on his feet. They crossed nine black mountains, crossed nine large black rivers, and led him bound to the black place of the Shu spirits, to the prison of the Nizekougong iron fortress. Letting thin goats with sharp horns guard the main gate tower, thin dogs with sharp teeth guard the middle, thin fish with sharp scales guard the foot of the wall, and an old servant guard the gates of the black prison.

Dongzi Alu cried sadly in his prison. Maida Goumu resignedly advised him to his side. After some time Maida Goumu gave birth to two children: the boy was called Haba Luobu and the girl Haba Luomu, who said cordially to both parents: "The father who raised me is my bones, the mother who raised me is my flesh[45], but bone and flesh are in no way the same! We go to the father's country with its white sky and white earth, there we will still have to be shepherds during the day to make a living, there at night we will be reunited with the family.

When the old servant guarding the door heard these words he immediately went to inform Chief Meiling Shuzhu, who said: "The Lord cannot share his table with the slaves, the domestic animals cannot share their pasture with the savages!"

So Dongzi Alu was hung from one of the black prison posts. He was going to die but still didn't die, although he wanted to live he couldn't survive, he didn't look like a person anymore because of the torments. Maida Goumu then said: "If you tie a horse for a long time, its offspring will be hungry; if you hang an enemy for a

[45] Bone and flesh form the fabric of the family's social life. The bones are the relatives on the male side, the flesh on the female side. The bones are hard, the base, the flesh connects the bones. Charles McKhann has studied in detail the social and family structure of the Naxi based on the concept of meat and bones. A similar system existed in China.

long time, he will die. If you want to kill him, then kill him, and if you want to let him go, then let him go."

Then the Shu generals met to discuss what to do: "This boy was captured on the shore of the Dong Sea, let's kill him on the shore of our black sea." In this way, Alu was dragged by the soldiers to the shore of the black sea. Maida Goumu followed them nervously, begging: "Dongzi Alu is a capable and kind boy, his face is as clear as the sun and the moon. Don't let blood and dirt stain that beautiful white face!"

Then Anri Zhuobu took his sword and cut off his head. Good Dongzi Alu died for that cut on the shore of the black sea. After his death his head was taken by the poisonous spirits, his feet by the spirits of war, his bones were divided among the soldiers of Shu. The black butterfly also flew to sip its blood and the black ants went up to gnaw its flesh. The black shamans of Shu's house offered his skull to their black war gods and turned his entrails into medicine for their black war gods. Meiling Shuzhu managed to relieve the pain from his heart. Completely euphoric for his success, in his joy he looked like a water cypress blooming.

The orphaned brothers Haba Luobu and Haba Luomu swore to themselves: "We are the seed of the bones of our father, who was a descendant of Dong's house, we want Dong's people to unleash a victorious war so one day we can return to our father's homeland.

Meiling Dongzhu's family still didn't know where Dongzi Alu had gone, or where he was rotting. Every day he longed for his son's return, only to discover at night that he had not yet returned; month after month he longed for his return, but every day the sun rose without his return. He waited for him to return within a year, and as he had not returned by that time, he sent his soldiers everywhere to look for any trace or news of Dongzi Alu. They searched from the east to the far west without being able to find him, they searched for him from the north to the south, without

any success, and even in the center of the earth, they searched for him equally without any result.

Unable to find Dongzi Alu, Meiling Dongzhu's heart didn't settle down. He then sent soldiers to go to Junaruoluo mountain to look for him, but they did not find him either; he sent them to look for him next to the great Heyibada tree, the great Milidaji sea, the great Zengzenghailu rock, without finding him anywhere. Already desperate Meiling Dongzhu lamented: "My beloved Alu, he may have been killed by the evil spirits of Shu."

The two brothers Haba Luobu and Haba Luomu secretly eluded the black clouds and the black wind of Shu begging the white wind and the white clouds of Dong to inform their family: "Dongzi Alu has already been killed by the Shu spirits."

When the sad news reached his home, it touched Dong's world. Meiling Dongzhu and the Golden Mother Zizao cried non-stop, the Dongba Yingshe Buzuo couldn't stop crying either, the white sky and white earth, the white mountains and valleys couldn't stop crying either, the mountain dragons, the fish and shrimp in the rivers, all cried non-stop. Then Meiling Dongzhu, with a countenance always grieved, full of anger and indignation exclaimed:

"I have nine skillful children, but none as skillful as Alu was. I have nine intelligent daughters but none can compare to Alu. His face had the light of the sun and the moon, his eyes had the brightness of the stars. Even if in one day I meet a thousand people, I will not be able to meet my beloved Alu, even if one night I see a hundred people, among them will not be my beloved Alu. Alas, Alu, the foundation of Dong's house, your thirsty mouth shall drink no more water, your hungry guts shall eat no more food, surely you are buried in the seventh level of the black lands of the Shu."

Meiling Dongzhu didn't eat even if he was hungry. The Golden Mother did not drink even if she was thirsty, out of her

weeping came a groan that touched heaven and earth: "Dongzi Alu of our Dong family has died, heaven can fall on earth, the earth can be turned over to heaven, the sun and the moon can lose their light, for life no longer has a taste."

Then Meiling Dongzhu summoned the three great gods Salu Wode, Igu Ake, and Haddu Oper[46] Unable to three other great gods Zhuashen Hengding, Yingshen Hengding, and Mingju Hengding to discuss together how to avenge the injustice committed by his enemies.

"Dongzi Alu has been killed by the Shu spirits, handcuffed and shackled at his feet. I want to mobilize the generals and soldiers of the kingdom of heaven, and all the soldiers of the country of Dong to kill the head of the Shu Meiling Shuzhu. The hatred of his relatives will take revenge on his enemies, like millions of butterflies that gather around a tree, we are going to beat and knock down to the ground the sky of the Shu, we are going to turn over the land of the Shu, we are going to completely exterminate the nine cities of Shu.

The great god Salu Wode of Buddha's heart provoked a magic and a huge iron rock fell from the sky, then appeared Guozhi Laoduan, the great master blacksmith of the Dong, who day and night was melting iron. Between flames as big as eagles and a sound of the oven like the song of a dragon he struck the iron with the sound of thunder.

Blacksmith Guozhi Laoduan forged armors with designs of tigers[47] and leopards and steel helmets that shone like silver, forged arrowheads and spears, tridents and swords. He cut three forests of firs to make thousands of spears, he cut three forests of yellow

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46 Salu Wode, Igu Ake and Haddu Oper are the three main gods of the Naxi.

47 As the tiger is also the god of war, some implements of war take their form, include remains of their anatomy, or are simply named after them to invest them with courage and power. More about its symbolism in *El Tigre in China: imagen y símbolo.*

chestnut trees to make thousands of sword handles, he cut three forests of golden bamboos to make thousands of pieces of shields, he killed thousands of *pian* and yaks to make bows with their tendons and bones, and ropes with their leather and to surround with their tendons the tips of the arrows to make them very strong. Dong soldiers and generals trained day and night, an army that filled heaven and earth. The celestial generals and soldiers were going to finish their training, the Dong army was going to mobilize, the hatred of their relatives was going to take revenge on their enemies, the Dong army was going to the land of the Shu to kill them.

Meiling Shuzhu deliberated with his three generals: "The Dong generals and soldiers may come for revenge. To definitively prevent their advance we must quickly build ninety-nine defensive lines."

The first defensive line was on the mountain, defended by a big black dragon. The second was defended by a tiger as black as coal. The third, by a large black poisonous snake. The fourth, by an abominable black frog. The fifth, by a black dog with an iron head. The sixth, by sharp spikes of black stone. The seventh, by sharp black bamboo spikes. The eighth, by the horns of wild black oxen nailed like stakes. The ninth was defended by the poisonous black wind.

Evil deer-headed spirits used deer skeletons to build nine villages, then practiced archery between the whistling of their arrows and prepared to defend the gates of those nine villages. Evil earth spirits with ox heads used ox skeletons to build nine villages, then practiced archery between the whistling of their arrows and prepared to defend the gates of those nine villages. The same did evil spirits with horse heads, who used horse

skeletons to build nine villages, preparing to defend them[48]. And the spirits of lamb-headed water used lamb skeletons to build nine villages. Goat-headed war spirits used goat skeletons to build nine villages. Venomous yak-headed spirits used yak skeletons to build nine villages. Sterile spirits with *pian* heads used *pian* skeletons to build nine villages. Thieving spirits with dog heads used dog skeletons to build nine villages. *Diluo* spirits with chicken heads used chicken skeletons to build nine villages. Dragon king spirits with fish heads used fish skeletons to build nine villages. Obscene frog-headed spirits used frog skeletons to build nine villages. Snake-headed conflagration spirits used snake skeletons to build nine villages. All of them practiced archery preparing to defend their villages.

But no one had yet gone to defend the black fortress of Meiling Shuzhu, Nizegougong. The thin goats went to defend its main, the gray dogs of sharp claws went to defend the middle part of the wall, the black fish of thin gills went to defend the back part of the wall. Black clouds and black winds curled over the fortress. Copper and iron spikes were nailed around it. A deep channel was excavated protecting the wall, which was filled with water. The black yak was sent to defend the left side of the gate and the fierce black tiger to defend the right[49] side, millions of Shu soldiers capable of jumping and flying were also summoned to defend that fortress.

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[48] In fact, following the rules of ritual texts as well as the memorization of mythologies transmitted by oral tradition, here the same paragraph is repeated as in the first two sentences, which we have tried to simplify in order to make their reading more fluid.

[49] If in ancient China many buildings were considered protected behind the statue of a dragon and a tiger symbolizing yin and yang, among the Naxi are replaced by a yak and a tiger, with the same meaning, as seen in numerous paintings and manuscripts. Looking south, the yak corresponds to the east (yang) and the tiger to the west (yin).

To the east of the lands of Shu, nine wooden spirits built nine villages, defended by their chief Dairao Jinbu, while the black tiger defended its gate. To the south of their territory, nine fire spirits built nine villages, defended by their chief Shizhi Jinbu, while the black dragon defended its gate. To the west nine iron spirits built nine villages, defended by their chief Leqi Sipu, while the black-footed bear defended its gate. To the north nine water spirits built nine villages, defended by their chief Nuzi Jinbu, while the long-maned black mule defended its gate.

Meiling Dongzhu lived in the white lands and Meiling Shuzhu in the black lands. Between black and white, on the border between white and black lands, a white stone had been erected, which marked the territory of the Dong and another black stone which marked the territory of the Shu. Between Dong and Shu a great enmity arose, between them there was no contact, not even the birds that flew had contact. The Shu spirits said that they were going to occupy the place where Dong's white stone was, and that they were going to steal his rooms full of gold. The Dong said that they were going to take the place of the black stone of the Shu, and that they were going to live in the black houses of hard iron of Shu. The enmity between Dong and Shu was deepening, the strong bow was tightening and the sharp arrow was on the rope. In houses where there are injustices there are always disputes, enemies always end up killing each other, so it was certain that a great war was coming.

Meiling Dongzhu sent a quick-footed servant to invite the Dongba shaman Yingshi Buzuo. A white carpet served as the lounge, with the plowshare as the centerpiece, offering to the Buddha gold, silver and other treasures. A yellow ox played the surrogate victim. Nine types of trees were cut down from the mountain to make dolls that could jump, five types of flour were

brought from the kitchen to make figurines that could laugh[50]. Wooden figures replaced the father and flour figures replaced the mother. Nine types of hair and horns represented nine types of domestic animals. By day curses were read in the scriptures of the substitute spirits, by night the spirits of injustice enemies were expelled, taking them all to the dark place of Meiling Shuzhu. The Dongba built a door of white pine, with green pine he made his cross beams, surrounding them with the guts of a chicken, with pine needles representing the soul of the enemies and wide leaves of azalea representing his tongue. Roasting a strong-flavored goat and a cured-flavored male pig, they locked the soul of enemy chief Meiling Shuzhu under a deep cave on the border between black and white.

Meiling Dongzhu sent the white monkey and white fox to the territory of the Shu spirits to investigate, and the white bat and white phoenix to guard their lands, the white ox and the white horse to the land of the war spirits to make inquiries, and the white bee and the butterfly to fly to the place of the water spirits to spy. When they returned, they informed him: "The Shu spirits have mobilized an army of thousands of soldiers, raised ninety-nine leopard villages and ninety-nine lines of defense guarded by tigers."

Meiling Dongzhu could not reassure himself, so he went to deliberate with the Dongba: "If we do not invite celestial Generals Derko and Yuma to come and help us, we will not be able to break the ninety-nine defensive lines of the Shu, nor destroy the ninety-nine black fortresses of the enemy, nor destroy their solid

[50] Wooden figurines and bread crumbs are essential in most Dongba rituals. They represent different minor deities whose participation in rituals is, however, necessary.

black fortress. As they did not know the history of the Yuma celestial generals they decided not to call them yet[51].

The celestial gods Salu Wode and Wuzhe Hemu were hatching and a white egg as big as a tent emerged. That strange white egg was embraced by the two gods for three days without hatching. The green dragon of the sky embraced it three days without any result, the sun and the moon embraced it three days. The great white snail from the top of the mountain and the white lion also embraced it for three days. The tiger that lives in the old fir forest embraced it for three days, without any result. The flying cobra that lives on the Junaruolou mountain also embraced it for three days, and the roc that lives on the sacred Heyibada tree, and the sacred wolf that lives next to the Zengzenghailu rock also embraced it for three days, but the egg was still unborn. The turtle that lives in the great sea Milidaji, also embraced it for three days without any result. Since the turtle had a nervous character, it ripped the egg with its hand, breaking its shell, and then a liquid came out from which thousands of Yuma generals were born. The brilliant lord of those Yuma was the god called Baowei Yuma.

The celestial gods Salu Wode and Wuzhe Hemu, who had hatched them for three days, became the father and mother of the Yuma generals. From those that the sun and the moon hatched the heavenly Yuma generals with a shining aspect arose, from those that were hatched by the green heavenly dragon the heavenly Yuma generals with a dragon's head arose[52], from those that were hatched by the lion as white as a conch the heavenly Yuma

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[51] A constant in Dongba rituals is that before summoning the power of any deity or natural element, one must tell its story, a story that will justify its power to act in the way that is required.

[52] The narrative in the classic ritual style, repeats that each one of these animals had hatched them for three days, which we omitted here to lighten the narration. In Naxi mythology, there are hundreds of Yuma generals, each characterized by having the head of a different animal.

generals with a lion's head arose. From those who were nurtured by the ferocious tiger that lives in the fir forest came the Yuma generals with tiger heads, from those who were nurtured by the cobra that flies on Mount Junaruoluo came the Yuma generals with cobra tail, from those who were nurtured by the roc bird that flies over the sacred tree came the Yuma generals with roc wings. From those who were nurtured by the wolf came the generals Yuma with a wolf's head, and from those who were nurtured by the turtle of the great sea came the generals Yuma with a turtle's head. Once all the heavenly Yuma generals had appeared, the shamans assigned them their proper names. Then the Yuma generals built in the sky a fortress red as the fire where they lived.

As soon as the Yuma appeared, the heavenly generals Derko soon emerged. If the origin of the Derko is not known, one can't talk about their affairs. When black and white were going to be separated, if there was no sun and moon one couldn't divide them clearly. When day and night were going to be divided, if it wasn't for the star of dawn and dusk, one can't divide them clearly. When north and south were going to be divided, if it wasn't for yellow gold and pink clouds one couldn't divide clearly. When high plateaus and river valleys were going to be divided, if it wasn't for snow and rain one couldn't divide clearly. When one wanted to divide between the distant and the near, if it was not for the bees of the cliffs could not be divided clearly. When one wanted to divide between winter and summer if it was not for the sound of the green dragon as the jade could not be clearly divided. When one wanted to divide between relatives and enemies, if it was not for the heavenly general Derko can't be clearly divided.

The great mountain of the White Snail is the ancestral home of the Derko parents, the black sea of pearls is that of their maternal ancestors. The great Golden Mountain is the ancestral home of the Derko parents, the green sea of jade is that of their maternal ancestors. Daji Hengying was the father of the Derko

and Darao Qunima was their mother. Youlao Dingban was the father of the Derko and Mizhe Luomu was their mother. Those eight people[53] were taking care of them by giving rise to nine male Derkos and nine female Derkos. Of these, the eldest was called Puding Daju. Nine months and thirteen days later, the green dragon as the jade entered the great sea Milidaji, causing wood, fire, iron, water and earth to come out, the great five elements, from whose transformation two people arose: Suba Jinbu and Suba Jinmu[54]. The two ended up matching by chance and were taking care of themselves in such a way that 360 heavenly generals Derko arose, the rays of the sun made them transform by emerging Nidu Derko, the light of the moon made them transform by emerging Suobanidu Derko, the clouds and the wind made them transform by emerging Zengni Derko, the water and the fire made them transform by emerging Sheku Derko.

There was nothing the celestial generals Derko could not see. How many children do the sun and moon have? What men can't see the Derko see. How many sons and daughters have ants and insects crawling on the ground? What people can't know the Derko know. How many manes are there on the black wings of the golden celestial donkey? What people can't see, the Derko know. In which direction do the manes of the tail of the great steed Chenda Woxu stand when it crosses a river? What people can't see the Derko know. How many stripes and wrinkles does the great red tiger of East Badi have? The Derko know. How long is the horn of the great dragon green as the jade of the south? The Derko know that. Whether the hairs on the head of the white conch lion living in the west are exuberant or not, only the Derko know. How many branches do the horns of the great northern

[53] We see that it mentions four natural phenomena and four people, the four grandparents of the father and mother of the Derkos.
[54] At birth all people are formed from the five elements. When they die, they all disintegrate into the five elements.

white conch deer have? Only the Derko know. There's nothing the celestial generals Derko can't see. There's no matter their sharpest insight can't overcome.

Meiling Dongzhu used yak and lamb meat, prepared good wine and good food, using meat from fattened pigs and lean pigs, and devotedly offered it to heavenly generals Derko and Yuma. Using branches of cypress and butter he washed his face and burned incense, which he devotedly offered to generals Derko and Yuma.

The eyes of the Yuma generals turned three times,
Shining like the radiance of stars and comets
The teeth of the Yuma's mouth struck three times
Like the sound of thunder in the sky.
The Yuma's tongue spread three times,
Spreading like a rainbow in the sky
The Yuma's hair fell out three times.
Like the sound of the wind cutting through a forest of fir trees on the mountain
The tail of the Yuma wagged three times
Like a fierce wind blowing over the mountain peak.
The whole body of the Yuma trembled three times
All spirits and demons,
They trembled with fear, they shook in surprise.

The celestial generals Derko and Yuma wanted to descend into the world at once, to immediately begin the expedition against the villages of the Shu enemies in the black lands, burn everything with intense fire, burn it to leave it clean and leave nothing behind.

Meiling Dongzhu and the sky god Salu Wode decided it was time to launch the army of Dong soldiers and celestial generals to avenge the enemy. Then thousands of Dong soldiers mobilized, as well as 360 celestial generals Derko and Yuma; thousands of rock

birds, phoenix, white eagles and white cranes spied from the sky, white leopards, white tigers, white *pian* and white yaks, encouraged them from the right side, thousands of celestial soldiers capable of flying and jumping ahead were opening the way. The vengeful army of the Dong turned over heaven and earth in their march to the lands of the spirits of Shu to end the injustices. The vast army of the Dong advanced forward, with their war breeches and helmets, wielding their swords and knives, with their spears on their shoulders and bows on their backs, their shields in their hands, the tips of their spears shone. The flags of victory waved in the wind, the avenging army headed to the Shu lands to kill them.

The Dong army reached the first mountain of the Shu, which defended by the enormous dragon black as coal, blocked its advance. Then the spirit of the heavenly generals Derko and Yuma was transformed, a white-shell lion emerged, which killed the black dragon and destroyed the Shu's first line of defense. The Dong army continued to advance and reached the second mountain of the Shu, which was defended by a tiger as black as coal. The spirits of the heavenly generals were transformed again, a green armadillo emerged[55], which punished the black tiger, breaking the second defensive line of the Shu. To destroy the third line, guarded by a poisonous serpent, the celestial generals were transformed into a golden peacock who defeated the serpent; the fourth, guarded by a great pestilent frog, was surpassed by transforming its spirits into a golden tiger; the fifth, protected by the black dog with an iron head, was surpassed by transforming its spirits into white celestial leopards. The sixth, protected by a great sharp black stone, was surpassed by the celestial generals, which turned into a skillful

[55] The tale of the tiger and the armadillo, popular in these lands, which narrates how after engaging in a duel, the armadillo defeats the tiger by rolling down the mountain and sneaking through the tiger's mouth to its stomach, where it stretches and destroys the tiger from within, may explain this seemingly strange victory.

artisan who broke the black stone with a great white iron mallet; the seventh, defended by a sharp black bamboo, was destroyed when its spirits were transformed into a celestial archer who with his celestial arrows broke the tips of the black bamboo; to destroy the eighth, defended by the sharp horns of a wild black ox, the celestial generals transformed themselves in a great saw with which they cut the horns of the ox. The celestial generals and Dong's soldiers continued to advance until they reached the ninth defensive line of the Shu spirits, which, defended by a black wind, blocked their way. The spirit of the heavenly generals was transformed into a sharp magic sword, which with its brightness dispersed the black wind.

The heavenly generals and Dong's soldiers continued to advance. They had traversed the nine great black mountains, crossed the nine great black rivers, passed through the nine great black forests, arriving at the place occupied by the evil spirits of death. The evil deer-headed spirits of death, who had built nine villages using deer skeletons, threw arrows that sounded "siii, siii" preventing the Dong army from advancing. Then celestial generals Derko and Yuma became a celestial general mounted on a golden tiger, who killed the general who led the deer-headed demons and defeated the spirits of death, breaking their black arrows and spears, piercing helmets and shields and ravaging villages with fire and water.

Dong's army continued to advance until they reached the land occupied by the spirits of the ox-headed earth, who had built nine villages with ox bones. The heavenly generals became a lion of the white conch that killed the general and the spirits of the earth with ox heads, breaking their black arrows and spears, piercing helmets and shields and ravaging their villages with fire and water[56]. In the

[56] Once again we avoid the repetition that characterizes a ritual text to give a certain agility to an already complex story.

same way the nine villages of the spirits with a horse's head and the tongue outside were dismantled by a heavenly general with the body of a bear and a white belly, killing his chief and destroying his weapons; as well as the nine villages of the water demons with the head of a lamb, which were dismantled by a heavenly general otter with a white sword; the nine villages of the spirits of war with goat's head by a celestial long-toothed white leopard general; those of the poisonous spirits with yak's head by a celestial white-legged steed general; those of the spirits of sterility with the head of *pian* by a strong heavenly general yak; those of the spirits of thieves by a red heavenly general tiger; those of the spirits *diluo* with the head of chicken by a general silvery eagle; Those of dragon spirits by a celestial general mounted on a grey otter; those of obscene spirits by a celestial general mounted on a rock with white shells; and those of fire spirits by a celestial general mounted on a resplendent peacock.

The Dong army continued its advance through the vast territories of the Shu spirits to reach their vital zones, then celestial generals Derko and Yuma launched themselves into the vanguard. A Yuma general mounted on a white snail lion killed the wooden tiger black as the charcoal defending the gate of the eastern villages, and the chief of the eastern spirits Diaorao Jinbu, destroying their nine villages, and controlling with fire the spirits of the wood. A Yuma general mounted on a dragon green as jade killed the dragon black as the coal defending the southern village gate, and the southern spirit chief Shizhi Jinbu, destroying their nine villages and controlling the fire spirits. A Yuma general mounted on a golden tiger set out to kill the legless black bear defending the gate of the western villages, and the head of the western spirits Leqi Sipu, destroying their nine villages, and controlling the iron spirits. A Yuma general mounted on a large golden elephant lunged forward, killing the long-haired black mule defending the northern village

gate and the northern spirit chief Nuzi Jinbu, destroying their nine villages, and controlling the spirits of the water.

The black arrows and black spears were broken, the black armors and helmets were pierced, the furious fire was extinguished by the water, the heart of the territory of the Shu spirits was destroyed by the four directions, the Shu spirits fled through their villages, in the end remaining in their hands only the black fortress Nizekougong. To the right of the great gate the fortress was guarded by a black tiger, who was killed by a Yuma general mounted on a green armadillo, the left side was defended by a black-footed yak, who was killed by a Yuma general mounted on a golden red tiger.

The celestial generals Derko and Yuma lunged forward victoriously sweeping away the fortress of the Shu spirits. A Yuma general mounted on a celestial wolf with a black body and white head killed the thin goat defending the main gate, another mounted on a leopard killed the grey black dog defending the central part of the wall, and another mounted on a grey otter killed the thin black fish defending the back of the wall.

General Dong Gukao
He put together a white pine catapult
With the skin of the tiger made a belt of stone bullets
Putting big stone missiles in the basket;
The stones they threw from the left hit the right.
And the ones on the right on the left.
Each of the bullets hit the fortress.
Shredding the fortress of the Shu spirits.

The celestial monkey of the Dong then threw himself carrying in his hand a large iron mallet with which he broke the iron and

bronze stakes that had been nailed around the fortress[57]. The Dong victory flags waved in the wind, scattering the black clouds and the black wind that moved over the black fortress. Then the Dong soldiers threw themselves forward and with their hoes in their hands they knocked down the moat of bad waters that protected the wall, drying the water and smoothing the earth like a plain.

All of the defensive lines of the Shu spirits had been destroyed, as had all of their villages. Their last fortress would also be destroyed, killing thousands of Shu soldiers, suppressing the three chiefs of their armies, as well as the couple of rulers mother Genshao Namu and the unjust chief leader of the house of the Shu Meiling Shuzhu. His skin was made into a cushion for celestial generals Derko and Yuma, his heart was offered to the spirits who had helped them defeat the war, his bowels served as an offering to the gods of victory, his skull was offered to burn incense to the gods of victory, and his bones were used to make horns (of music) to the gods of victory.

The thousands of Dong soldiers returned triumphant, the three hundred and sixty heavenly generals Derko and Yuma returned triumphant. The victorious army of Dong soldiers and celestial generals did not stay in the nine black villages of the Shu spirits, nor in their nine black forests, nor in their nine black rivers, nor in their nine black mountains, nor in their thirteen black plains, but they returned in triumph directly. The victorious army of the Dong did not remain in the place of the poisonous spirits, nor in the place of the spirits of war, nor in the place of the spirits of water, nor of the aquatic monsters, nor in the lands of the spirits of those who die by hanging, nor in the lands of those who die young. Neither in those of the spirits of the earth, nor in those of the *diluo* spirits, nor in those of the thieving spirits, nor in those of

[57] A clear allusion to the monkey Sun from the novel Journey to the West.

the spirits of tongues, nor in those of the spirits of barrenness, nor those of evil death, but returned in triumph directly[58].

The explorers who had earned so much merit, the golden bees did not stop at the place of the spirits who like to eat bee meat, but ignoring their tiredness they returned in triumph, and with the dew pearls of the hearts of the flowers made medicinal honey. The white horses that had acquired so much merit in the war did not stay in the place of the spirits where the red deer called them, but ignoring the tiredness they returned in victorious triumph, and using fresh grass and dew pearls they made medicine for the war horses. The white *pian* and yaks who had fought so well, did not stop in the lands of the spirits who like to eat the flesh of black wolves with white faces, but ignoring their fatigue they returned in victorious triumph, and with clear running water they made medicine for oxen and *pian*. The white *pian* and yaks, who had fought so well, did not stop in the lands of the spirits who like to eat the flesh of black wolves with white faces, but ignoring their fatigue they returned in victorious triumph, and with clear running water they made medicine for oxen and *pian*.

The red-armed black monkeys of the spirit land could weep and lament, the heavenly golden monkeys did not stay there but returned in triumph; the spirit land hunting dogs with their quivers hanging, the heavenly grey wolves did not stay in their lands but returned in triumph; the woodpecker of the lands could make fire, the green cuckoo did not stay in the lands but returned in victory. The black chicken that could fly from the land of the spirits, the shining peacock did not stay there but returned in triumph. The victorious army returned directly.

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[58] It should not be forgotten that this is a ritual text, and the exhaustive enumeration of the places where the victorious army does not stay shows the process by which the spirits who came to the aid of the Dongba during the ceremony return each to his own place after achieving victory over the spirits that caused the evil.

The dew pearls on the great Baoda tree were used to make the victory medicine of the heavenly rocs, the dew pearls by the Salt Water River were used to make the victory medicine of the sacred yak, the dew pearls of the red fir forest were used to make the victory medicine of the sacred tigers.

The victorious white crane subdued the long neck black heron, the victorious cuckoo subdued the whistling dove of the forest, the sacred roc to the chicken black as coal, the green dragon to the black dog with iron head, the lion to the wild mule with long manes, the golden tiger to the wide-mouthed fox. The Dong army returned victorious waving their victory flags, golden flags, silver flags and green victory flags.

At the end of the war Meiling Dongzhu invited Dongba Yingzhe Buzuo to offer his victory to the god of war devoutly, using the blood and entrails of his enemies to make a medicine for the god of victory. Meiling Dongzhu's house, if they wanted to fly, they flew, if they wanted to jump, they jumped, if they wanted to transform themselves then they could do it in three ways. The horn of victory sounded, and the bonfires of victory flamed, the river of victory flowed. The victorious Dong killed the Shu, the victorious celestial Buddhism subdued the demons.

At that time of Meiling Dongzhu, the sky was separated by the east and the earth as well, villages were built from the east and children were raised from the east, fields were planted from the east, and horses were ridden from the east. Everything started from the east.

The great sky is not covered by clouds
The space is wide and extensive
A mantle of stars covers the sky
The sun rises and bids farewell to its golden rays
The moon rises with its night light
The earth is large and not covered by rocks

Its plains are wide and extensive
Green grasses cover the land
The water flows from the ponds
Cows and sheep run around covering the land
Crops grow exuberantly
And people achieve longevity.

Notes

Bai Gengshen[59] presents five versions of the myth, with great differences between them, even in the plot, which he divides into two groups. In the former, the enmity between Dong and Shu results when the latter attempt to steal the sun and moon that give light to the Dong, in the latter there is no relationship with the sun and moon, but with the death of Dong's heir, Alu. They all have in common the division of the world between black and white, their enmity, and war as a result of it, as well as the victory of white over black. But there are also important differences, among which the motives of war stand out, which may or may not be related to the theft of the sun and the moon, the character of black and white, the techniques used, and the result of the war, because in the first case it ends with the liberation of the stars, and peace and in the second the union of Dong and Shu is born before the war, the sons of Alu with a Shu girl.

"Na" means in Naxi not only black but also big, noble, etc. Their clothing was formerly black, and in some neighboring populations, such as the Yi (Nosu), Nuzu and the ancient Qiang, black was also the most important color. The author considers that the importance of white among the Naxi is linked to the influence of Tibetans and their Bon religion, influenced in turn by a Buddhism that gives more importance to white. That way white

[59] What is symbolized in *The battle between black and white.*

becomes the main color of the Naxi. For him the myth would symbolize the transformation of the Naxi way of life from a primitive nomadic shepherd to a sedentary agricultural life, represented respectively by the black of the yaks, sacred in the first epoch, but white later. The myth shows the rejection of that past life. It could also show an influence of Chinese culture and especially its Five Elements theory, and signal the end of its migrations from the north (black) to the western part of the Chinese world (white).

Zhao Lu[60] believes that the opposition between black and white can be a Manichean influence, as the followers of that religion, active during the Tang dynasty, influenced Taoism. At the origin of the world of this myth is a Taoist influence with creation arising from the interaction between yin and yang, and then developing from the five elements. The defense of Shu entrusted to different animals, representation of those animal deities, and the supernatural victory of the Dong thanks to the intervention of powerful deities is for the author a sample of the victory of the Buddhist influences (of the white school present in that area) on the Dongba and their abandonment of the ancient religion centered in the cults to the nature, represented by the black.

Mikio Miyamoto[61] recalls that Japanese researcher Tetsuro Suwa regarded blacks as nomads and whites as peasant, and that Naxi scholar He Shihua went even further back, considering it was an account of the battle between white (Shang Dynasty) and black (Xia Dynasty). He himself considers that the myth is related to the cosmogony of the Bon religion, and that it would have been influenced by Persian religions, especially Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, since in both religions the world starts from cosmic eggs: one white and the other black. It also draws attention to the

[60] On the religious thought as seen in the Battle of Black and White.
[61] Guiding the Soul to the Land of the Dead.

fact that the Dongba use this text when treating their patients or to avoid misfortunes. He then relates it to modern treatments, and the remedy of meditation, by the process of visualizing the immune system and imagining leukocytes searching throughout the body to attack malignant cells. The patient's imagination that white defeats black can contribute to its healing.

The Qiang, related to the ancestors of the Naxi, have a history of the battle between the White God and the Black God recited by their Sipi shamans in some ceremonies. In his story the white god is good and the white is bad. White says, "People need me. Everyone is rich and happy with me." Black says, "I've made a deal with a demon and I'm in the company of devils. I bring disasters to people: married people argue, families fight, cattle suffer epidemics, etc." Then the white god defeats the black god and disasters and diseases are overcome.

In my humble opinion other concepts related to the complex culture and history of the Naxi are reflected in this myth.

The relationship between the Naxi and the Shu spirits of nature. The Naxi conquered a land that was already populated by spirits, whom they also had to conquer or accommodate. As Matheiu points out, during the time of the marriages with the local princesses, the dominion of those spirits was conferred to the chiefs by the marriage itself (the phrase of The Golden Mother Zizao before the attack of the Shu "Women are not touched" points in that direction.) When there are no more marriages with local princesses, but pure military conquest, other formulas must be designed to calm the local spirits, such as defeating them, as in this myth, with the help of heavenly generals. The conflict between people and Shu spirits never ends, because the rituals offered to them when problems arise only seek to restore balance.

Conflicts between the Naxi and the original inhabitants. The myth could refer also to the continuous wars of conquest that mark the history of the Naxi. At their arrival to the Lijiang area, those lands

were already inhabited by other peoples, possibly the ancestors of the Pumi and Lisu of today, and perhaps even by remains of other original peoples. The expansion of the Naxi towards the Tibetan world is plagued by military campaigns, described in detail in all their cruelty in the reports to the Chinese emperors, of which this myth is but a heroic poetization. The War between White and Black justifies the right of the Naxi to rule over the land conquered from the original inhabitants of the area, as bearers of higher moral principles.

Relations between men and women. The initial victory of the Shu spirits with the capture of Dongzi Alu is not due to his powerful army, but to the combination of feminine charms and the magical powers of a woman. In a seemingly incomprehensible narrative bias, the same woman who seduces the world of the Shu, when he is captured by his enemies, shares with him the life of prison, and begets him two children. Dongzi Alu is then sacrificed. Perhaps the memory of the ancient myths in which the king was sacrificed resonating in these remote lands? Another culminating moment is when their children, who seem to have the choice between their father's world and their mother's, opt for their father's bone, which triggers his father's execution. What is the point then of this cohabitation in prison between their father and their mother, long enough to allow the birth of children, and we assume at least, their ability to speak, even if we attribute to them a magical capacity for growth? That there is a long lapse of time between the capture of Dongzi Alu by the Shu world and his death is also reflected in the description of the long wait for his news by his parents. If the first choice of the children to belong to the side of their father triggers his death, the second, in which they promise to avenge him, triggers the great war that destroys the world of his mother, the Shu world. Curiously enough, they're never discussed again. For the Naxi, the white mountains represent the masculine, the black, the feminine. This shows that this conflict between black and

white can be perfectly interpreted in the context of the transfer of power from the feminine to the masculine element.

Conflict within each person against their dark side. During the reading of the myth it becomes implicit an assimilation of its content to the struggle within each person between the same duality of black and white. During the initial stages of it, one feels that there is a struggle between the dual nature of people, a plot that leads to tragedy. The identification of the person with the world of light forces the suppression, within him, of the wild nature. It cannot seem by chance that during the spiritual journey in which Dongzi Alu follows the Shu's girl to end up a prisoner of that world, he passes through the world in which "trees walk and stones speak" which is nothing more than a description of the original situation of the undifferentiated world. Dongzi Alu travels by her hand to the beginning of time. She is a magician and the journey she proposes, spurred on by seduction, is common to the traditions of the peoples of Yunnan, China and even the peoples of North Asia. A seduction that is evident in ritual marriages with the goddesses. Among the Chinese it is exemplified in the ritual seduction of the Taoists by the Queen Mother of the West. Among Siberian peoples for the ritual pairing of their shamans with the goddesses of nature.

The Romance of Kama Yumiji

In the green mountains there was a meadow where the shepherds played the flute and the shepherdesses played the mouth harp. Ninety shepherds in their tents, seventy shepherdesses behind their bamboo fences. By day when they took care of the cattle, all the shepherds looked like brothers; by night when they rested, all the shepherdesses looked like sisters. The most skillful of the nineties shepherds was the leader Nzipo Yulepai, the most ingenious of the seventy shepherdesses was their leader Kama Yumiji. Nzipo's heart was as attached to Kama's as the two stones of a mill. Kama surrounded his beloved as water surrounds pine green, Nzipo surrounded his beloved as green grass surrounds ganoderma fungus[62].

The lives of the young people passed in peace and joy. In the three months of spring the grass is tender and the water sweet; the lambs love the grass tender, the heart of the shepherds is as sweet as the water. In the three summer months the wind blows hot, the thick grass fattens the lambs and the heart of the shepherds is also hot. In the three months of autumn, yellow flowers appear on tree branches, autumn rain cools and shepherds[63] warm up under the

[62] A type of mushroom typical of the region that is believed to provide good health and spiritual potency.

[63] The text's insistence on continually pointing out the existence of shepherds and shepherdesses should be interpreted as an emphasis on showing that both sexes are present with equal importance in the story. In order to make the

blankets. In the three winter months, snowflakes fly over the snowy mountains, lambs chew the wilted grass, shepherds pile up around the fire.

A flower is not red for a hundred days, nor a fresh herb for a thousand days. If the shepherds always stay in the same place, they don't let the meadows prosper[64]. When a tree grows it branches out, when young people grow they must become independent, so the shepherds thought of emigrating, of going somewhere else. Behind the mountains there are still more mountains, behind the sky there are other skies. The young people decided to emigrate in search of good land, so they picked up their tents and prepared for the march. The mountains won't block the long march they're preparing.

Hearing this news, their parents were uneasy. From each house, they sent messages to the distant prairies, full of advice and recommendations: "O shepherds, the heart of your fathers cannot emigrate, it cannot go far away, but our words are like gold. Quickly go home. In the sky is the way of the stars, quickly follow it to return; in the earth is the way of the herbs, quickly return on it; in the mountain is the way of the trees, quickly return among the trees; in the valleys is the way of the water, quickly from there come.

When the shepherds received the message, they also sent them their answer: "In heaven is the way of the stars, to which they bear three stars. When these three stars come out the firmament is filled with stars. One can't go down that road, we can't go down that road. Above the earth is the path of herbs, to which artemisia leads, but the herbs cover it completely, spreading all over the soil. One can't go down that road and the shepherds won't be able to come

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reading more agile we have translated many times only as "shepherds" even though the book indicates “shepherds and shepherdesses ".

[64] The essence of nomadism, to allow the regeneration of pastures.

down. In the mountain is the path of the trees, the azaleas lead to it, but when the azaleas bloom the trees fill the whole mountain, on that path one cannot walk, on that path we will not go down. In the valleys is the way of the waters, to which the dragon leads, when the dragon floods it the water covers everything. We can't go down that road, we won't go down that road."

After several days of walking they came to a very special place. From a distance one can see that it was a good place in the middle of a beautiful landscape. From the mountain springs flowed clean water, the flowers were beautiful and fragrant, the forest greened the mountain, and the herbs were like jade. The shepherds were delighted. The sound of the flutes spread, the wind carried it through the mountains, the brilliant sound of the mouth harps crossed ten thousand hills. The shepherds wanted to go far away, the further away the more beautiful the landscapes, nobody wanted to return home.

Their parents waited seven months for them to come down, but it was all in vain. They waited nine months without any results. Each house sent a message advising the young shepherds: "The old trees have lived long lives, but they agree to give their vitality to the flowers; the river that flows eternally willingly gives its vitality to the foam that disappears; the old also willingly give their vitality to the young. Shepherds, quickly return home."

When the message reached the young people, they replied: "The flowers wither and disappear without the old tree being able to join them, the foam disappears without the eternal river being able to approach it; the young people go away not to return, how can people stay at home? The branches of the old tree block the sunlight, and the little trees grow weak. On the road that opens the mighty river is difficult that the water can extend. The horse locked up in the corral has no strength. Young people at home don't feel free. Of the green trees the most beautiful are the flowers, of the crystalline water the most beautiful is its foam, of

the people in this world the most beautiful are the young. A day cannot have two dawns, a year cannot have two springs: when the eaglet becomes strong it takes advantage to fly away, when the young grow up, they must leave freely.[65]"

Their parents were worried. Not knowing what to do, they summoned the animals to carry their message once and again to the young shepherds. "White Crane flying through the clouds, please go to find our children." The white crane screams in the heights, calls the clouds that gather on the peak of the mountain and become white snow and can't go to look for them. "Cuckoo flying around, please go to find the young people." The cuckoo calls them "there's tomorrow, there's no night". He's so busy looking for food that he can't go to look for them. "Cicada that sings on the tree branch, please go to find them." The cicada is calling them, but before winter arrives, it loses its skin and cannot go to look for them. "Wild duck flying over the water, please go to get them." The wild duck cackles, but it only causes a downpour and with wet wings it can barely fly, so it can't go to look for them. "Muntjac that run through the woods, please go to get them." But the muntjac mother lives in a pine grove and her children in a chestnut grove, living in both places, cannot go to look for them. "Antelope that jump among the rocks, please go to get them." But while the mother lives on the high rocks, her children live on the low rocks. Living in two places, it can't go to look for them. "Fish that swim in the water, please go to get them." But the big fish swims in a big pond and the small fish in a small one. Swimming in two separate places it can't go to search them. "Paradise flycatchers, please go to get them." But the tail of this bird is very long, the males do not carry their chicks and the females must feed them, and cannot go to search them. "Little frog living by the pond, please go to get them." But the frog's four legs can only

[65] Quite a statement of the young people's desire for freedom.

jump without being able to walk, they have a mouth but they don't have a tongue, so it can't go to search for them. "Swallow that fly over the cliffs, please go to find them." But the tail of the swallow is divided and it flies from one place to another, busy all day building its nest it can't go to look for them. "Wagtail that lives by the river, please go to get them." But the wagtail has a white head, it moves its head and tail, circling the river, and can't go to search them. "Griffon vulture fluttering in the clear sky, please go to find them." But the griffon vulture flutters three times at the top of the sky, and another three times at the bottom, without going down to the ground to rest, it cannot go to search them.

The parents were very nervous, on the hillside they built a wall with white stones and another with black stones. The white stone wall consisted of nine layers, the black one of seven, all in order not to let the shepherds come out.

The meadow is all green, the clouds of the sky are as white as a flock of lambs. The shepherds sing, the sheep bleat, the music of the flutes spreads through the air, until it is confused with that of the mouth harps. Nzipo cuts the branch of a pine, with which amused makes the lambs jump, Kama takes a willow branch, with which playing guides her lambs. The shepherds want to leave, they dress up like gentlemen, the shepherdesses want to give them some gifts, but they can't find anything there. The shepherdesses want to emigrate and put on very pretty make-up, the shepherds want to give them gifts, but they don't find anything there. Where are pearls, gold and silver?

Nzipo lowers his thoughtful head, Kama walks and stops, they go round and round without their hearts resting, forgetting to care for their flocks. The sound of the bleats spreads, reminding them to take care of their lambs. In gathering the flock each counts 99 heads and they realize that each one is missing a lamb. A white-headed lamb which they don't know where it is. If they don't go to find them, the god of the shepherds may get angry. All the

shepherds go out to look for the lost lambs. They search through nine mountains without seeing a trace of them, through nine forests they search them until suddenly they hear a bleating sound. Following that sound they reach a cliff where there is a large magic tree that holds the sky and rises among the clouds. Its branches are coral, its leaves jade, it has flowers of gold and silver that produce pearls and precious stones. The lost lambs bite jade leaves under the tree.

During the three winter months the north wind sweeps away dead leaves, snow presses on branches, and the magic tree does not shed leaves. During the three summer months, heavy rains soak everything, dripping on the magic tree, which cannot bear fruit. The green jade shines, the pearls shine bright, fascinating the heart of the shepherds, enchanting the heart of the shepherds. Very happy they gather to think about what to do with that tree. They take some fruits to eat and they take some leaves to feed the sheep, they cut some branches to make a corral.

The black eagle that sits on the top of the tree can come to attack them. By braiding the hairs of the ponytail, a loop is made in which the eagle falls and stops frightening the lambs. Wasps resting on tree branches may sting them. With resin they make torches and set fire to their nests, so that they do not come to hurt them. The tigers that live at the foot of the tree can throw themselves to eat the people; by burning some bamboos they are made to explode, causing the tigers to flee and not come to bother people.

The white crane flies, the golden pheasant flies, the deer runs, the antelope runs. Birds fly, beasts jump. The shepherds are happy, the shepherdesses laugh. A month follows a day, a year follows a month; time is like an arrow, once fired it cannot return. It seems a moment, but three days have passed; it seems a day but three days already; it seems a month but three months have passed.

The man carries his precious sword, and becomes a hero; the girl wears her apron, and so she is beautiful. They dig the earth for gold, they make mines for silver. They look carefully for the place where there may be agate and pearls. Kama carries her knife to cut the silver tree, Nzipo carries his ax to cut the golden tree, but they are not sharp and cannot cut anything. So it's best to start over and make axes and knives again. With three plowshares they make axes and knives, with the skin of a mottled horse they make a bellow to enliven the fire; with the green wood of a chestnut tree they make good coal.

Since they can't make good axes and swords they invite a blacksmith to come. They kill a cow for breakfast, a pig for lunch and a sheep for dinner. When axes and knives have been forged, they still have to be tempered by putting them in water. They invite the white-tailed dragon, which spits out its sacred water to warm them. The new knives are very hard and do not bend, the new axes are so strong that they can cut a cauldron. They rub them with a stone until their edge is sharp. To carry them safely they ask a unicorn to make covers with his horns.

Nzipo and Kama get ready to cut the magic tree, so they come closer and cut with force jumping a white silver shard that falls into the mountain. To carve that silver they invite a silversmith who makes bracelets and earrings. Girls wear earrings, which tinkle when they move. The boys look at them and think they're very beautiful. The boys put on the silver bracelets that glitter on their wrists. The girls look at them and they look so handsome. Nzipo and Kama forcefully cut down the magic tree again, causing a shard of gold to fall to the ground. They invite a blacksmith to work on it, who makes golden bracelets and earrings. Girls wear earrings, which glow when they move, and they're so beautiful. The boys put on the gold bracelets that glitter on their wrists, and they look so handsome. They cut the magic tree once again and a jade splinter comes out that a jeweler polish, making jade earrings

for the girls and covers for the boys' knives. And they all look so handsome. From a new cut comes a shard of shell, with which the girls make some frames for glasses, and the boys some pendants, and they look so handsome. They cut the tree again and a string of pearls comes out, with which the girls make necklaces, and the boys make belts, and they look so handsome. A new cut brings out a shard of gems, which the girls crimp by making chokers, and the boys embed in their crossbows, and they look so handsome. From the last cut comes a fragment of copper that falls on top of the mountain, where the red tiger lives. To hunt the red tiger arrows are made with copper and so Nzipo can hunt him, with his skin make covers for swords and quiver for arrows worn by boys, also make cushions, bedspreads and clothes, girls sit on cushions of tiger skin and dress in tiger skin[66]. When they look at each other, they all look so handsome.

With the yellow bamboo that grows in the mountains they make flutes for the boys and mouth harps for the girls. Now that the gifts are ready the boys look so beautiful, the girls so pretty, and they all combine so well. Nzipo plays his new flute and moves Kama's heart, because she likes it very much. Kama makes sound her new mouth harp, the light and pleasant sound penetrates in the heart of Nzipo, who listens to her pleased.

Horses are harnessed with gold stirrups, dogs wear silver necklaces. The shepherds carry precious swords and the shepherdesses carry their pearl necklaces. But in the end they got tired of that place and everyone wanted to emigrate, so they had a big meeting to choose an auspicious date. They thought of doing it in winter, but during the three winter months the white crane brings white snow, which blocks the mountains and forests so that

[66] We have already commented that sitting on a tiger cushion and dressing in a tiger dress are symbols of royalty. The one who in this myth shows the shepherds performed these acts emphasizes that they are equal to the shepherds or even in a higher position.

in winter they could not leave. They thought of doing it in spring, but during the three months of spring when one hears the cuckoo singing, the grass has just sprouted and the grain is not yet ripe, so in spring they couldn't leave. They thought of leaving in summer, but during the three summer months it rains without stopping one downpour after another, the water overflows everywhere and the legs of the horses get stuck in the mud, so in summer they could not leave. After the summer comes autumn and during the three months that it lasts in the mountain golden flowers bloom, and in the bamboo forests silver flowers are opened. A hundred fruits ripen on the trees and five grains on the earth. In autumn the days are good and the climate is the most suitable for travel, so the shepherds decide to migrate in autumn.

Opening the fence with their nine layers the boys run away, knocking down the fence in other places the girls run happily. Happy and excited, they set off for distant lands. So, singing and laughing, they advance without realizing it until they reach a great river. The water came down forcefully overflowing its banks, the wooden bridge that crossed it had been dragged by the waters. As the boys walked faster, they had arrived earlier and were already on the opposite shore while the girls were on the other, although they call each other they cannot communicate. The boys begin to make a stone bridge, but before they finish it collapses, and although it hurts some, more is their pain at not seeing the girls.

They, from their shore, try to make a bridge with hemp, but before they finish it also breaks, and although it hits some when it falls, it hurts more not to see the boys. Nzipo always has ideas and calls the shepherds to a meeting. With pine wood they make a boat and with cypress wood the oars, and so rowing from one side to the other they reach the other side, and they no longer fear that the water will separate them. Kama, who is very ingenious, summons girls to think. They kill some big rams and with their skin they make some rafts, in such a way that swimming on them

they arrive at the other shore and they no longer fear that the water will separate them. A spider weaves its net on a withered tree on the riverbank. From the spider they studied the best way to make a liana to cross the river. With vines they make a liana, with bark they make an end, and they stretch it over the river, and they no longer fear that the waters will separate them[67].

Joyful young people gather, happy to be together again, but no one is happier than Kama and Nzipo. Under the high mountains, next to the sweet valleys, the shepherds gather next to the fire. The little fish swim in the water, the bees flutter over the flowers; the young lovers are together again. By the halfway point, they had eaten all the dry grain[68], and their bodies were exhausted from climbing mountains and crossing rivers. Beneath the Rock of the Stars there was a small, narrow cave. It grew a little larger and became suitable for temporary living. At the foot of a high mountain there was a flat expanse of land that looked like the palm of a hand, as it was not very large it expanded a little, and in it, some things were planted. With the buckwheat that was collected, things were prepared to eat, with hemp and furs fabrics were woven and people were able to get dressed.

After spending some time there the shepherds set out, the shepherdesses began to move. To emigrate to a distant place, to look for a good place. All the boys and girls got going[69]. The young

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[67] Here the three traditional ways of crossing a river between the Naxi are described. Many of its rivers are mountain rivers with a considerable current in which boats are not useful. The lianas are used for the narrow rivers between ravines. The first travelers to their lands were surprised to see them cross the Yangtze River in their sheepskin rafts.

[68] A wheat paste that they carried as provisions during their warrior or other expeditions.

[69] We see the shepherds in their continuous nomadic activity, always in search of new pastures, just as the life of the Naxi ancestors could have been before settling in the Lijiang region.

Kama set out with concern; but the parents of the young Nzipo stopped his departure and took him home.

Oh, the sky had not yet moved and the stars had fallen, the sky and the stars were separated. Without the prairie moving the grass fell away, the meadow and the grass were separated. Without the shore going away, the water disappeared, the shore and the water were separated. Without the tree leaving the leaves fell, and the tree and the leaves were separated. Nzipo left with tears in his eyes, Kama turned her head three times at each step. Lovers separated, mountains separated and waters blocked is difficult to meet again.

They crossed nine mountains and seven rivers to a new place. In the meadows of the mountains there were good pastures, the plains on the banks of the rivers were wide, the water of the rivers clear and sweet, the flowers bright and fragrant. They began to build their houses and built nine houses, where people stayed to live establishing a new village. They tilled new fields, digging new ditches that irrigated the fields. Shepherds paired up, leaving only Kama, who felt very sad. Not seeing her beloved Nzipo, tears streamed from her eyes. The pines join the cypresses, the white snow with the white clouds, the gold with the jade, the coral with the pearls, and Kama wants to join Nzipo.

Mandarin ducks fly in pairs until they are separated by the wind, lovers are united until they are separated by their parents. The only company that had Kama is her reflection in a mirror, the only thing that grabs her hand is the silver bracelet. It is not that nobody wants to see her, it is not that nobody wants to shake her hand, a hundred faces from the mirror want to look at her, a thousand loving hands shake towards hers. But for her, it only increases her misery. The brightness of the mirror is the heart of Nzipo, the warmth of the bracelet is the desire of Nzipo. Playing with her round mirror her heart is illuminated, touching her silver bracelet her heart is warmed. The wind blows the leaves of the

trees, maybe it is that Nzipo leaves, the dogs bark at the door, maybe it is that Nzipo comes. Kama waits and waits, sure that Nzipo will return.

A solitary goose goes through the clouds, which cover it until it loses sight; Nzipo's heart also flutters through the clouds. In his hand he carries the sword with its hilt crimped with jewels that shine in the sun. But it's not the precious stones that shine but Kama's eyes. In his hand he carries a coral-hilted sword that sparkles in the sun. Ah, it is not coral that glows, but the blood of Kama. When Nzipo looks at his sword he feels very sad, the fire that burns does not warm him, the fragrant tea has no taste.

It seems as if the white clouds have legs, which invite one to stand on one's feet, which make one jump until reaching the sky. The male eagle throws itself on the clouds, the white deer leaves its den. Nzipo, you have to study from them. The first day at night he thought of escaping, but with only one foot he cannot run. Besides, his parents' eyes are watching him closely and he could not escape that night. The second night he thought of escaping, a rooster with two legs doesn't fly very high. His parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The third night he thought of escaping, the iron tripod burns with fire. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The fourth night he thought of escaping, a chair with four legs is very stable. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The fifth night he thought of escaping, a house with five rooms closes very well. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The sixth night he thought of escaping, six measures of pasta have not yet been fried. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The seventh night he thought of escaping, seven stars illuminated the whole firmament. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The eighth night he thought of escaping, eight piles of wheat have not yet been threshed. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The

ninth night he thought of escaping, the nine oxen of the plow have not yet eaten. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. The tenth night he thought of escaping, ten bundles of firewood have not yet been cut. But his parents' eyes are watching him and he couldn't escape. Every night he thought of escaping, but every day he chose badly, and his parents' eyes watch him closely without allowing him to escape.

Looks like Kama, and maybe some other young people, has come down from the mountain.

Kama was in her room weaving. While she was weaving, she thought of her beloved. Tears wet her cloth. Day after day Kama knitted but her heart could see no hope. Her tears kept flowing. She had been betrothed to a man she didn't know and didn't care about. Instead of going with her husband she thought it would be better to commit suicide with her lover, shepherd Nzibo. But she didn't want to die, and she was delaying the moment with a thousand excuses. She climbed the alpine meadows and waited patiently for her lover, murmuring in the meantime that she would end up committing suicide. She was thinking that she had been abandoned and now she was alone, but at least the god of home had not been taken from home. "Couples live together, both happy and unhappy. If one leg breaks then the other has a cane as a companion. If you go blind then your partner will be your guide. A golden boy gave me a mirror and a golden girl gave him a bracelet. But for me it's just been a burden to carry and a package that fills my arms."

Kama sat in her house weaving blue and yellow fabrics. She was making some gold and silver[70] dresses. As she placed the turquoise thread on her coral spindle she thought, "What does it

[70] It is not clear whether he was already weaving the suicide dresses, since they were gala clothes, since they could not be presented in any form to the ancestors.

matter if I weave quickly or slowly? The truth is, it doesn't make sense to weave." At that moment she looked up and saw a crow flying by. Turning to it, she asked, "Crow, crow. Could you help me carry a message? It will not be as heavy as other burdens, for carrying words is not as carrying a person. A tree is very heavy to carry but its leaves are light. The water is heavy to carry but its foam is light."

As the crow nodded to her request, she continued: "Please take this message to my beloved little shepherd and my political parents. Under the sky where men are born the male stars have not yet reached the conjunction with three of the many ascending female stars and I am one of them. Over the village the sheep have not yet nibbled three of the many tufts of grass and I am one of them. Near the village, there is a very beautiful boy who has made love with many girls except three and I am one of them. Quickly prepare the horse. Quickly saddle a horse with a golden saddle and come to see me. Put my bridal gown in the bridal trunk and come to meet me with my dowry."

The crow carried Kama's message, repeating her words to her political parents. After hearing the message they replied: "Under the sky where men are born the male stars have not yet been in conjunction with three of the many female ascending stars and you say you are one of them? That star then gets up late and therefore doesn't shine. During the three months of summer the sun, the moon and the clouds hide it. You were born in such a time and you're not one of the many stars. In fact, you're a bad star! Above the village, the sheep have not yet chewed on three of the many tufts of grass and you say you are one of them. That grass then grows late and therefore is not green. During the three winter months, the cold freezes it and kills it. You were born at that time and of the many herbs you are none. In fact, what you are is weed! Near the village there is a beautiful boy who has made love to many girls except three and you say you are one of them? You're

the one who made love to him. In fact, you've even slept with a leper! You're like a mare full of boils. A green snake has rolled up in your vagina and you carry a green frog in your uterus[71]. You're the one with the suicide rope around her neck. No girl, we're not going to call you sweetly to come to our house. We're not going to saddle a horse with a gold saddle to go to meet you. We're not going to put your wedding dress in the bridal trunk or going to take you with your dowry. Go and find a husband by yourself somewhere else. We'll go find a wife somewhere else."

When the raven brought her that answer, Kama's heart was filled with sadness. Trying to get over herself, she said, "Good. I don't actually love you. I won't listen to you." Then she exclaimed, "O tiger! The mountains exist before you were born but since then you have lived in the mountains. The black pig wanders through the valleys, but he couldn't be wandering if there were no valleys. As there are valleys the black pig can wander around them. If the clematis did not exist there would be nothing ascending around the tree. If the tree were not straight the clematis could not ascend through it, but as it is straight it ascends."

During the day she cried, the night she spent without being able to rest because although she had a good heart, she thought bad things. She tied a few black stones to her skirt and headed for the water to commit suicide but the surface of the water was as blue as her eyes. She felt timorous as she did not wish to die, so she returned home. She rolled up a new rope and went to a tree to commit suicide but the tree beak was moving because it had no mouth and had not asked her to go there to die and rot. She felt pusillanimous because she didn't want to die so she went home.

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[71] Attention the snake and the frog. It is possible that this paragraph shows us the conflict between the Naxi of the city, already to a certain degree sinicized and those who still remain faithful to their traditions, and to tell her that she carries a snake and a frog is to call her traditional Naxi, peasant, uncouth, because the snake and the frog are symbols of their natural deities.

She then put on her golden shoes and went to a precipice to commit suicide but the face of the precipice was pure white as her own face. She felt discouraged not wishing to die and returned home.

Kama was sitting in her house weaving. "What does it matter if I weave fast or slow? My hands are busy but my dark eyes are not." She looked again at the sky and saw the crow again. She asked it to carry a new message. Trying to win its favor, she reminded it: "It will not be as heavy as other burdens, for carrying words is not like carrying a person. A tree is very heavy but its leaves are light. The water is heavy but the foam is light. Please take this message to my beloved Nzibo."

"A few days ago we talked about those lovers who commit suicide. Have you forgotten Nzibo? When white deer drink from a salty spring, the flavor stays in their mouth and makes them crave more. When the lamb eats the fresh grass of the mountain it does not forget it. If it wasn't for the silver, there'd be nothing to compare to the gold. If it weren't for the turquoise, the coral would be incomparable. If it wasn't for the pine tree, there'd be nothing to compare the oak to. If it wasn't for the clematis, the tree wouldn't have anything to roll up in it. If it weren't for the mother's uncle's son, the father's aunt's daughter[72] would have no one to marry. If it wasn't for Nzibo, Kama wouldn't have anyone. Saddle a horse with a golden saddle and come and get me. Put my bridal clothes in a bridal trunk and come to meet me with my dowry."

When Nzibo read the message he immediately replied: "I am a shepherd who spends his time in the high alpine meadows taking care of his sheep. During the thirty days of autumn I graze the sheep, during the three months of autumn the sheep come down from the meadows, and I cannot go. I said I'd go in summer, but

[72] Reference to traditional Naxi marriages.

for thirty days in summer I'm planting grain. During the three summer months, the grain ripens and I put the grain in the barn, and I can't go. I said I'd come in the winter. During the three winter months the white snow falls, as I don't have shoes[73] and one can't go barefoot with that cold I can't go then. I said I'd come in the spring. During the three spring months there may not be any food[74], the supplies will be used, so I can't promise to go then. Another night has come and I haven't gone yet, a new month has come and I haven't gone yet, another year has come and I haven't gone yet. I thought it was going to be one night, but it's been three. I thought it would be a month, but three months passed. I thought it would be a year, but it's been three."

As Kama sat in her house knitting, the female demons of suicide called her once, she listened to them a hundred times. They called her a hundred times, she listened to them a thousand times: "In the land of the living if you don't work you don't get food. If you don't graze the cattle, there'll be no milk. If you don't set your traps, you can't catch wild animals. And even if you work hard there is never enough to eat, and even if everyone is taking care of their sheep with all their attention, there is never enough wool clothing to wear. Come then and let your eyes shine on the lovely alpine meadows, let your feet joyfully tread the fresh herbs of paradise, leave to your hands the joy of milking the yak. Come and let your house be the clouds that rest on the high mountains! Come and drink the fresh water from the mountain streams! Come to where the bee collects the honey from the flowers of paradise! Come and make the red tiger your mount from which you will

[73] Bacot describes in the early 20th century that most Naxi walked barefoot even in winter.

[74] Most people starved for a few weeks in the spring.

graze the white deer as if it were your cattle! Come and milk the deer with wide ears! Weave the white clouds with a white wind.[75]"

Kama was thinking in these words and thought they were true. Her heart was good but she had bad thoughts: "If I went and hung myself it would bring me peace and put an end to my problems. If I don't, I'll always be on the brink of misery."

Then the female demons of suicide created an illusion. Three white clouds appeared in the sky as if they were corpses hanging by the neck, as did three columns of rain on the earth, three gusts of white wind on the mountain, and three bushes of green grass on the earth. She saw a butterfly hanged from the branch of a tree, and a dragonfly hanging from a stem of artemisia. As she sat sewing she saw a small snake hanging from the pole of her loom. It had eyes of gold and silver while its horns were turquoise and coral. Then she said to herself, "If I went out and hung myself, it would bring me peace and put an end to my problems. If I don't, I'll always be on the brink of misery."

The first celestial queen of suicide hung herself from the vault of heaven, her eyes were like coral. The second celestial queen of suicide hung herself from the vault of heaven, her spirit was like gold and silver. The third suicide queen did the same, her bones were as white as shells. The girl Kama went to see the places where they had committed suicide[76]. "If I go and hung myself, it would bring me peace and put an end to my troubles. If I don't, I'll always be on the brink of misery." She thought again.

The white crane hanged in the clouds, its down was like silver and gold. The cuckoo hanged in the beak of a green tree, its down was like turquoise and coral. The owl hanged on a high cliff, its down was like silver and gold. The laughing giant thrush hanged at

[75] Some authors have elaborated the brief descriptions of this paradisiacal state with which he is tempted by the demons of suicide, considering that he would refer to a primitive Naxi concept of natural paradise.

[76] This indicates that these deities are deified persons.

the tip of a cane field, his down was like silver and gold. The tragopan pheasant hanged from a yellow oak, its down was like turquoise and coral, the stone pheasant and the Amherst pheasant hung from a cliff and their down was like silver and gold. The red tiger hanged in the high mountain, its stripes were of silver and gold. The white deer hanged where the mists settle on the mountain, its horns were like branches of pines and oaks. The female serau[77] with its blue leg hanged in a cave on the high cliff, its mane was like turquoise and coral. The musk deer with long tusks hanged in a tree bent by the wind, its tusks became silver and gold. The red-eared Tibetan pheasant hanged on the branch of a juniper tree, its down was turquoise and coral.

The girl Kama went to see the places where these animals had committed suicide. "If I go and hung myself, it would bring me peace and put an end to my troubles. If I don't, I'll always be on the brink of misery." She thought again.

Her heart was good but she thought bad things. She put on his golden shoes and went to the ravine to commit suicide but the black ravine had no mouth to tell her to die there, so she turned around. She braided a new rope and went to a tree to commit suicide but the black tree had no mouth to tell her to die there, so she returned home. She put some black rocks on her skirt and went to the water's edge to commit suicide but the black water had no mouth to tell her to die there, so she returned home. She went west to the great oak of Mount Shilo to commit suicide but the black rope had no mouth to tell her to die there because she had not made the bow. After all, she had not yet decided. The yellow oak had no mouth to tell her to die there and she still couldn't make up her mind. "If it were not for this yellow oak I would not have decided to die here, but since there is a yellow oak I have decided to die. I'm going to hang myself because that's the

[77] A mammal similar to a goat or antelope belonging to the genus Capricornis.

custom." This is how Kama hanged herself in a yellow oak tree on Mount Shilo.

From then on, Nzipo's days and nights passed without meaning. He ate without interest, he drank and choked. During the day he took care of his sheep, but he didn't care about them. In the evening he returned home to receive the reprimands of his parents. Three days and three nights after Kama hanged herself it happened that Nzibo lost an old black cow without knowing in which direction it had gone. If cattle are lost and people don't look for them, their protective spirits can get angry. If the grain is lost and people don't look for it, the spirit of the harvest will get angry. So Nzibo went out in search of the lost cow and came to the foot of Shilo Mountain. Wandering through the mountain he met the spirit of Kama, for although she had hanged herself a few days earlier and her body was dead, her soul could still speak. When she felt his presence, Kama said: "Nzibo, a few days ago I gave the white wagtail a message for you. It sent you a thousand sentences. Didn't you get them? I also gave the crow a message for you. I sent you a hundred sentences, didn't you get them?"

Nzibo replied: "Certainly I received the message with your thousand phrases from the wagtail and the message with a hundred phrases that you gave to the raven. However, I said I would go during the three winter months, but I didn't have shoes and being impossible to walk barefoot in that cold I didn't go in winter. I said that I would go during the three months of spring but as I was afraid that there would be no food, since the barns were empty I did not go in spring. I said I would go during the three summer months but the rains started and since I didn't have the right clothes and didn't want to get soaked[78] I didn't go during the summer months. I said I would go in the three autumn months but there were so many things to do and for thirty days I was

[78] In July and August it can rain every day.

sowing the grain and then storing the ripe grain in the barn so I didn't go in autumn. I thought it would be one night but three passed; I thought it would be one month but three months passed, I thought it would be one year but three years have passed."

Nzibo then said to Kama: "The lamb did not want to obey and follow the others to the alpine pastures. The boy didn't want to follow the girl, he hadn't agreed to do so. It is said Kama that silvery flowers wither as soon as golden flowers, or turquoise or coral flowers." Then he looked up and his tears fell to the ground: "Kama, if I gave you the breath of a goat or a sheep, would you be able to speak again? If I gave you turquoise or coral eyes, would you be able to see again? If I gave you pine or oak roots as support, would you be able to walk again? If I gave you silver and gold teeth, could you eat again? If I gave you food, could you eat it? If I gave you wine, could you drink it? Could you eat tender and tasty meat? Could you wear golden shoes? Could you wear gold and silver dresses?"

Kama replied: "Let me make you understand that even if you gave me the breath of a goat or a sheep I would not be able to speak again because that is not the custom. Even if you gave me turquoise or coral eyes I could not see again for that is not the custom, even if you gave me pine or oak roots as a support I could not walk again for that is not the custom, even if you gave me silver and gold teeth I could not eat again for that is not the custom, even if you gave me food I could not eat it, even if you gave me food I could not drink the wine, I could not wear golden shoes or wear gold and silver dresses. That's not the custom."

Then she continued, "Will the crane and the hawk prey on my body during the day? Will the wild cat and the fox prey on my body at night? Nzibo, take out the sword that you carry in the belt[79] and cut the rope that I tied to my neck. Take off your felt

[79] Bacot reports that traditionally men and women carried a sword to the belt.

cape and cover my body. Burn me in the cremation zones. Burn me until my bones are white and my body has turned to soot and ashes. Please have my soul escorted to heaven."

Nzibo replied, "Let me make you understand that we must first wait for a propitious year and a propitious month. We must wait for the winds of winter until the artemisias and the leaves of the trees turn yellow. We have to wait for the call of the cranes and the arrival of the ducks. We have to wait until the waters flow through the pine-covered foothills. We have to wait until the fields are plowed until the grain is sown and the oxen are tired. We have to wait until the wine has boiled and fermented, until the sugar has boiled and settled. We have to wait until the pigs have been raised and fattened[80]. Until then I won't be able to take your body and place it in front of the front door of the house. Then I will cause your soul to be escorted to the three generations of your paternal ancestors and those of your maternal ancestors. Then I will return your three different possessions to your relatives. I will have your soul escorted to the place of your ancestors to unite with your deceased father and mother."

Kama replied: "Even if you were to give me the breath of a goat or a sheep[81] I would not be able to speak because I have not received the last traditional rites, so I will never reach the world of my father and mother[82]. Do not cause my soul to be escorted to the lands of my ancestors, do not wait for a propitious month or year. Don't wait until the wine has been cooked and fermented or until the sugar has been made. Don't take my body and place it in

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[80] It seems a description of the different activities necessary for the preparation of funerals.

[81] The continuous references to the goat and the sheep, in this context, undoubtedly refer to their role as psychopomps, accompanying the spirit of the dead, and their ritual sacrifice before the person who died.

[82] Refers to coins and grains that were placed immediately after death in the mouth of a person, without which it cannot reach the lands of ancestors.

front of the door of my house. Instead, have my soul escorted to the foot of the mountain where the female demons of suicide live. Now, Nzibo, take your sword out of the belt and cut the rope I tied around my neck, take off your white cape and cover my body, burn me in the cremation zone. Burn me until my bones are white and my body has turned to soot and ashes. You must do this for me."

Kama continued, "Nzibo, do you desire riches? Do you desire them as a black-eyed ox or seventy sheep yearn for salt? For there is a black rock where the land of gods and the land of demons unite and underneath it, there are pieces of silver and gold, as well as turquoises and corals. However, you can't take them until three years, three months and three days have passed."

Then Nzibo asked her: "So you will not call and untie the black clouds and white winds of the sky? You will not think bad things in that good heart of yours? You will not utter curses? You will not send the snow from heaven? You will not send the demons that make the cattle sick? You will not poison the grain[83]"?

Kama replied: "A few days ago we sent each other messages. Have you forgotten Nzibo? When white deer drink from a salty spring, the flavor stays in their mouth and makes them crave more. When the lamb eats the fresh grass of the mountain it does not forget it. I will not summon and unleash the black clouds and white winds of the sky. I'm not going to think bad things in my heart. I'm not going to curse. I'm not sending snow from the sky. I'm not going to send out demons that make cattle sick or poison the grain."

Nzibo believed she was telling the truth, so he took his sword and cut the rope that Kama had hanged himself with, letting her

[83] All are actions that can do evil spirits, those who are not properly attended after death, which instead of going to the lands of the ancestors remain to hover near the world of the living causing numerous misfortunes.

body fall to the ground. He then removed his white cloak and covered the body, and burnt it in the cremation area until her bones became white and her body turned to soot and ashes. Neither the crane nor the hawk could prey on her body during the day, nor could the fox and the wild cat at night.

But Nzibo desired riches as an ox with a black eye and seventy sheep yearn for salt. Three years, three months and three days had not passed when Nzibo took the gold and the silver, the turquoises and corals under the stone where the land of the gods and the land of the demons communicate. That made Kama think badly of him and she sent curses. She summoned and unleashed the black clouds and white winds. She sent snow, as well as demons that make cattle sick, and poisoned the grain.

Kama took the same rope with which she had hanged herself and tied it to Nzibo's neck. Then he went and hanged himself from a bamboo stalk[84].

Notes

This is a complex myth that is often divided into two parts so clearly differentiated that sometimes only one is translated. The first part narrates the paradisiacal life that the young people lived in the mountains, of which there are also numerous versions, all more or less similar. For the present translation, I have followed the version of *Lubanlushao*, published in 2009 by the Editorial of the People of Yunnan, adapting it when I thought it appropriate

[84] In some versions Nzipo feels sick when the rope is tied around his neck. When he gets home, he feels paralyzed. They call a *llubbu* fortune teller to diagnose the problem and a Dongba priest to perform the Harlaluku ceremony by which the demons of suicide are propitiated. Then he recovers from his illness.

with scenes from other versions. The second part narrates the time when after the separation, the lovers go slowly to the suicide. For it, I followed the version provided by Anthony Jackson in *A Nakhi Folk-Tale*. Only by presenting them together can it be understood that Kama is not a girl with a good heart and bad thoughts as she repeats over and over again, but she is the archetype of the Naxi woman who sees her rights taken away, especially the right to love and to choose freely her husband. That is why the Naxi girls identified with her, with the woman who has lived in freedom and is condemned to submit to a system in which her ability to choose ends. The tragic remedy she takes to avoid being married to a man she doesn't love is followed by them, for that same reason.

As Jackson points out, this story was probably the one that caused the most deaths in the past centuries, because Kama's determination to die and the descriptions of the paradise where the queens of suicide live were a very powerful temptation for the girls who saw their love impossible, and condemned instead to live in the company of a husband that they did not love. As the Dongba priests were sometimes accused of encouraging suicide with this narration, it is said that when they reached the most seductive parts of the myth they sang them in a low voice so that no one could hear them. The truth is that the suicides of scorned lovers were very frequent in Lijiang, and the Harlaluku ceremony to recover their soul, of the longest that the Dongba celebrated.

Congren Bandi seeks the medicine of immortality[85]

There was a time when Congren Bandi went hunting with his brothers. They spent three days and three nights hunting in the forest and when they returned home they discovered that their father and mother had died. And though they offered them three bowls of meat and rice, they could eat nothing; neither could they drink what they were offered nor wear their offerings. Depressed Congren Bandi said to himself: "What dies cannot live again, but the sick must be healed well. On the shores of the great ocean in the west, in the lands of the Chief Leqi Nenpu, it is said that a herb grows that provides long life without aging, I will go to look for that precious herb and I will return with it."

In this way Congren Bandi set out with his two brothers, each riding his horse. On the first day, they came to a great tree on the mountain under which there was a fountain, where they rested. At night Congren Bandi dreamed of a lama praying a litany and in his dream, he saw the herb of immortality. The next day he saw a silver pheasant perched on the tree under which they have slept, and he swore to himself: "If I shoot this pheasant and hit it, it is

[85] Translated from the version published in He Zhiwu's Selection of Dongba Scriptures.

that I will find the medicine of immortality, but if I fail to hit it I will not find it." He shot and hit it, exclaiming happily, "I'm sure I'll find the medicine of immortality." Shortly afterward, when they reached the plateau, a speckled deer with white horns leaped before him. Congren Bandi took a new oath: "If I hit this deer it is that I will find the medicine of immortality, but if I don't hit it, it is that I will fail." He shot and hit it right, shouting happily, "I'm sure I'll find the medicine of immortality." When he cheerfully approached the deer, he discovered that a small spirit the size of a thumb lived in its chest.

Surprised Congren Bandi hesitated before continuing to move his knife, fearing to kill him. Before he could react, the spirit spoke, asking him not to kill him, but to place him under some great tree. So he carefully pulled him out of the deer's chest and placed him on a stone under a tree. The spirit, grateful, said to him: "From now on my spirit will do everything possible to help you. I hope you reach your destination after a happy journey."

Congren Bandi continued his journey. Soon he came to a mountain guarded by tigers and leopards. They were approaching the border of Chief Leqi Nenpu's western country when they met a boy who was speeding down the mountain. When he saw them, he asked, "Congren Bandi, where are you going with your brothers?" To which Congren Bandi answered by telling him how they had been hunting for three days, finding on their return that their parents had died and, not resigning themselves to the inevitability of death, had set out to seek the medicine of immortality.

The speedy boy then said to them: "In the lands of the chief Leqi Nenpu where you go, the source of the medicines is green, but the source of the poison is also green; the medicine has golden flowers, but the poisonous flowers are also golden. You will not be able to distinguish the source of medicines from the source of poison, nor will you be able to differentiate the flowers

of medicine from the poisonous flowers." Congren Bandi then asked the boy to accompany them to help them distinguish medicine from poison. But the boy, a servant escaped from the house of Leqi Nenpu answered: "The way that has been walked cannot be undone to walk it again, the mountain that has been climbed cannot be descended to climb it again." Before separate, however, the boy advised him to spend three days where the medicines grow and three nights where the poison does, because in that way he could clearly distinguish the medicinal herbs from the poisonous ones.

Following his instructions Congren Bandi and his two brothers went to the place where the medicinal herbs grow, seeing that indeed the medicinal herbs could not be differentiated from the poisonous ones, so following the instructions of the boy they decided to spend a few days in that mountain. They spent the first day continuously observing the medicines with their eyes open like plates. On the second day they saw a spotted deer with white horns nibbling at the poisonous grasses, immediately falling to the ground where it began to roll as if it were going to die from one moment to the next; until it rolled to another prairie, where it bit some yellow grasses and suddenly rose as if revived, jumping away into the woods. On the third day, a black pig arrived, drank from the poisonous fountain, and also fainted rolling on the floor from one side to the other as if it were going to die. He rolled to another fountain, where after drinking a sip of medicinal water he suddenly recovered, got up, and run to the forest. On the fourth day, they saw the arrival of a large black ox that rubbed its horns with the rocks of a cave, so that one of its horns fell. Congren Bandi and his brothers quickly took the horn, where they hid the medicine of immortality, sneaking out of that place.

They hurried back home. When they arrived at the tree where they had left the little genius, he said to them: "You have done a good deed and I will not forget your kindness. Quickly

plant hundreds of stakes to hold the horses, cut hundreds of yak horns, make hundreds of bonfires with their dung and shoot hundreds of arrows at the cave until you divide it in two. And then go." The brothers did as the spirit directed them and continued on their way.

When Leqi Nenpu, the chief of the western regions, discovered the theft of his medicine of immortality, trembling with rage rode on a black pig and went out to chase them. It didn't take long for him to reach the tree under which the little genius lived, and when he saw him, he asked: "Mighty Leqi Nenpu, where are you going in such a hurry?" Leqi Nenpu explained angrily that he had gone out chasing the wicked who had stolen his medicine of immortality, asking if he had seen them pass. The little genius answered affirmatively, explaining that a very large group of people the previous day passed through there. They planted hundreds of stakes to tie their horses, cut hundreds of yak horns, and burned hundreds of dung to warm themselves. They were so numerous and shot so many arrows at the cave that they divided it in two. So assuring him that he could not face them, he recommended that he give up his chase.

So Chief Leqi Nenpu, seeing that he could not reach them, stood there for a while as if stunned, then cast a curse and returned to his lands. Congren Bandi and his brothers were on their way home at full speed. Because of the curse, they stumbled upon some azalea branches, and the medicine of immortality which they carried on their yak horn fell out.

The medicine spread over nine mountains and nine rivers. One drop fell into the sky, which became high and wide, another into the earth, whose surface became vast and extensive. Another fell into the sun, giving it its red rays, and another to the moon, giving it its white rays. Another drop went to the mountain Junaruoluo, a high mountain that does not age. Another to the Heyibada tree, which can never fall; another to the great

Zengzenghaitanlu rock, which cannot be broken; and another to the Milidaji sea, which cannot be dried.

Another drop fell to the plum tree, which in eight months blooms twice, another to a stone from which comes out the spark that gives fire, another to the snake, which although is cut in two pieces it can be reunited; another to the green grass, which although is cut at night grows again in the morning.

When Congren Bandi and his brothers returned home, they began to prepare for their parents' funeral. They invited the chiefs and the elders, the Dongba priests who read the scriptures, and drawing from the bottom of the yak horn the last drops of the medicine of immortality, they offered them to the spirit of their parents, who from then on could see with their eyes, hear with their ears, speak with their mouth, catch things with their hands and walk with their feet.

After offering them a few drops of the medicine of immortality, the dead did not revive but when they arrived in the lands of their ancestors, diseases were cured, they were able to eat the food they were offered in sacrifice, dress the clothes and ride the horses.

As the medicine of immortality was spread by rivers and lakes, valleys, and mountains, impregnating with its immortal power, in different degree, a multitude of plants and animals in nature, until today men collect in those plants the scraps of its marvelous power to cure diseases.

The tiger hero of the Naxi[86]

A long time ago, a man named Gaoqu Gaobo lived in the Baoshan area. He had a strong body, lively intelligence, and certain magical powers. He was always willing to help people. One day he went on a trip with a group of villagers. After a while, they ran out of supplies. Faced with the risk of everyone starving to death, Gaoqu Gaobo decided to go into the forest to look for some food, instructing his fellow travelers that if they saw any animal leaving the forest call him by his name.

Then he entered into the forest alone. After a while, when he had moved a bit away from the people, he suddenly began to tremble and became a tiger. Then he gave a great roar and went looking for a prey. It didn't take long for him to find a deer and throw himself at it killing it in a moment. Then, carrying it in his mouth, he set out from the forest to the place where his fellow travelers were waiting. But when they heard the tremendous roar of the tiger, they were frightened and leave the camp, remaining only one boy there.

When he saw a tiger coming out with a deer in its mouth, he remembered Gaoqu Gaobo's instructions and shouted his name. At that moment he became a person again. "Thank you. If you hadn't shouted my name I wouldn't have been able to become a

[86] Version published in Camelia magazine. 1982-3.

person again." Gaoqu Gaobo told him. The other travelers also returned and together they ate the deer.

The news of this extraordinary event soon reached the ears of King Mu[87], who called Gaoqu Gaobo to see if what they were telling was true. So the hero left his home, mounted his horse and headed for Lijiang. When Gaoqu Gaobo arrived before the king, he presented himself without any special bow: "I am Gaoqu Gaobo from Baoshan, I came because you sent for me." The king looked at him curiously and when he saw his simple clothes and a goatskin[88] on his shoulders, he looked at him with contempt.

Angry, Gaoqu Gaobo cast a spell and the king's wife and children, who were eating at the time, stood still, their bowls and chopsticks falling to the ground. The king then realized that Gaoqu Gaobo was really a person with special powers. So when the hero set out on his way home, thinking that as long as there was such a person could be a danger to his power, he sent two of his guards behind him with instructions to kill him.

When Gaoqu Gaobo passed over a stone bridge, the henchmen, taking advantage of his unpreparedness, attacked him from behind cutting off his head and running away. Gaoqu Gaobo bowed his body and stepped down from the horse. With his hands he took the head that had rolled on the floor and placed it in front of his chest. Then he went on his way waiting for a good moment to put his head on his neck in its proper place. Unfortunately, before he had a chance to accomplish his goal, his horse stumbled on some branches, causing him to fall to the ground. This time the head was quite far from the body and he could not reach it. Thus came death to Gaoqu Gaobo.

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[87] The kings of the Mu family ruled the destinies of Lijiang from the 14th to the 18th century.

[88] Part of the traditional costume of the Naxi, although it is currently worn only by women.

When people heard of his death, they wouldn't stop crying. Very sad, they performed a funeral and incinerated his body. Soon after, they built a temple in his honor and began to regard him as a god who can put an end to people's difficulties.

The cuckoo announces the spring[89]

In the old days, the Naxi didn't know how to cultivate. They depended on collecting wild herbs and fruits to survive, as well as capturing and hunting some animals and birds. Therefore, when winter came, when the herbs and fruits disappeared and the animals and birds left, they went hungry, for they had nothing to eat. The sky god Milidong Apu saw this situation and decided to help the men by teaching them when to plant so that agriculture could begin. But this god lived in heaven and people on earth. So he should look for a messenger to take his instructions to the human beings.

Behind the house of the god Apu lived two Cuckoo sisters, who, knowing his plans, decided to go down to the world of humans and take to the people the announcement of spring. So they left heaven, crossed rivers and mountains, and came at last to where men lived.

At that time the Naxi lived in caves. The Cuckoo sisters shouted from heaven: "Spring has brought, spring has come. Go to sow, go to sow." Hearing these words people came out of their caves in droves, but to their surprise they only found two beautiful birds fluttering above them. Then some said, "There are two birds

[89] Version of the magazine Camelia 1984-3.

there flying. We've been on the verge of starvation and these birds are still coming to chatter: "What a nuisance!" Another proposed, "Shoot them an arrow and we'll eat them."

The Cuckoo sisters could not even suspect that their good heart would bring them misfortune. On the contrary, when they saw these men of long hair, dressed in animal skins, coming out of their caves, they said to themselves: "That's good! What help for the people! Thanks to our song, people will plant now and when the ears are golden they will gather it, ending the hunger of the winter".

As soon as she had finished speaking, the whistle of an arrow reached the older sister, dropping dead without being able to say a word. When her little sister saw her fall, she was frightened. Nervous entered the forest without understanding how people instead of thanking them for their good deeds responded so horribly.

When she was crying, a chicken came to ask her why she was crying. She told him what had happened and the chicken not only did not comfort her but mocked her: "The truth is that you are too silly, instead of enjoying life in paradise you come to seek death in this evil world. But its words did not diminish the spirit of Sister Cuckoo who only wondered why people had killed her sister. "Maybe they weren't used to her voice yet? Or is it that we've arranged ourselves so elegantly that it bothers people?" At that moment the chicken hollowed out its wings: "Sister, you don't understand these disastrous businesses, you better go up to heaven, or become my companion. I live in the middle of the forest, I hear the song of the water flowing and the little insects in the grass. Why worry too much?"

Sister Cuckoo wanted to teach this selfish being a lesson, but instead, she suggested that they change their clothes. The chicken was very happy and thanking Sister Cuckoo for her generosity he prepared for the change of costumes.

With the grey clothes of the chicken, sister Cuckoo ascended into the sky and as she flew she began to sing: "Spring has arrived, spring has arrived. Go to sow, go to sow." Soon after, the days became warmer, the herbs grew green, the flowers opened, and people finally understood that Sister Cuckoo was pointing out to them that the planting season had arrived. The following year she did the same thing and the human beings got a good harvest in the fall.

To thank Sister Cuckoo for her contribution to improving people's lives and punishing men for killing her sister, it was decreed that the Naxi would never kill a cuckoo again. As for the chicken, which with the beautiful clothes of the cuckoo was strutting from one place to the other, it was decided to turn it into the favorite animal to make sacrifices to the gods and spirits.

Tiger, leopard, cat[90]

The tiger, the leopard, and the cat were three brothers. One day, they were discussing how to share the food. The eldest, the tiger, said: "Today we're going to send the third brother, the little cat, to get something to eat." The cat left, he searched and searched. He searched three mountains and three rivers. He searched for half a day and only found one little mouse. When he came back, he said to the leopard and the tiger:

"Brothers. I've been looking for food for half a day, and I've barely found a little mouse, which without being enough for the three of us to eat, is just what a meal of mine would be. The leopard brother in the middle is the one we should send to get something to eat. Is that all right with you?"

His brothers agreed, so the leopard went out to get food. He searched three mountains and three rivers. He searched for half a day, coming back only with a black hairy dog. Then he said to the tiger and the cat, "Brothers. I've been looking for food for half a day, and I've barely found a black dog. That's not enough for the three of us to eat, but it's just enough to make one of my meals. The older brother tiger is the one we should send for food. Is that all right with you?"

Both the cat and the tiger agreed. The tiger then went out to look for food. He searched three mountains and three rivers. He

[90] Translated version of the Great Story Series of the Peoples of China.

searched for half a day coming back with a big cow, which the three brothers ate. They ate for three days and three nights without being able to finish eating even one leg of the cow.

Since then the cat can only catch mice, the leopard at most can catch a dog, but the tiger became the king of the animals.

The origin of the *milapu* matchmakers[91]

A long time ago there was a father and a son who lived in a mountain village. They were so poor that the son could not marry at the right age. One day a tiger came and asked them, "What do you live on?"

"We make a living working on the Lord's land." the father replied.

The tiger continued, "What kind of work do you do for him?"

"Everything." The father told him. "Cut firewood, carry water. The three daughters of the Lord carry silks and apricots but we only wear this coarse cloth and eat the food of dogs and pigs."

The tiger then asked him, "Would you like me to find a woman for your son?"

When his father heard him, he said, "We are so poor that no girl will want to marry in our family."

Several days later the tiger captured the landowner's eldest daughter, who he secretly brought home saying, "Your family is too rich and this family is too poor. You better stay here and be a good wife, otherwise, I'll devour you."

The girl was so scared that she had to stay and live with them. She asked her husband to get her a loom for sewing and she

[91] Translated by Bai Gengsheng, Na-khi Tiger Myth. 2001: 255.

worked on it every day. The husband sold in the market the silks and damasks that she had woven, and the family enjoyed a better position every day.

But one day, her embroidery was sold to the landowner's family. Recognizing her lost daughter's style, he asked her poor husband, "Are these items stolen?" The poor husband replied, "No. My wife knitted them." His other two daughters examined the fabrics and discovered that they were identical to those woven by her sister. When the lord asked him how he had gotten a woman being so poor, he was forced to confess the truth. The landowner was perplexed to discover that this servant was now his son-in-law, but he had no choice but to acknowledge his marriage. Since it was the tiger that brought husband and wife together, people call the matchmakers *milabu*.

The fox and the hunter[92]

Once upon a time, there was a fox running through the forest that suddenly fell into a trap set by a hunter. Once inside, without being able to leave, he used the magical powers that foxes and other animals have to transform themselves into persons. So when he heard that the hunter was coming, he cried out, "Help, please get me out of here."

The hunter, surprised to find a person trapped in his trap, helped him out and took him to his house where he gave him dinner.

They were chatting relaxed after dinner when the fox transformed into a man advised the hunter: "When you catch a fox, it is enough to take its skin off, you don't have to break its belly" thinking that this would avoid dangers in the future. The hunter nodded.

Shortly after the charm was gone and the fox returned to its original form, with such bad fortune that it fell back into another trap of that same hunter. When he arrived he took the fox and remembering the conversation of the previous night he removed his skin. Then he thought, "Why don't slit his belly?"

[92] Camelia Magazine 1984-3.

Seeing no reason for not doing it, he slashed the fox, discovering to his surprise the same food that his strange guest had eaten the night before.

Tales of the ingenious Aydan[93]

Mr. Mu's fame

All the people of Lijiang know that there is a guy named Aydan, who despite being poor dares to face the king. Everyone has heard those stories in which Aydan defeats the Mu master thanks to his ingenuity, for which he is admired and respected, and although the Mu and the palace people hate him, they have no way of defeat him. What's not so well known is how the enmity between the Mu and Aydan began. Here's the story.

When Aydan arrived from his village in the city of Lijiang to work at the Mu palace[94], the Mu king had already heard of his fame, having been told of some of the episodes in which Aydan's ingenuity had come to the fore. So he thought that the best way to prevent Aydan from making fun of him would be to take advantage of the very moment of his arrival to immediately lower

[93] Translated from the compilation of Aydan stories by Zhao Jingxiu and Sha Li.
[94] As already mentioned, Mu kings ruled Lijiang from the 14th century until 1723, when Lijiang became ruled by the regular system of imperial administration. Still dispossessed of political power, the Mu family remained the most powerful in Lijiang. As in these stories they are treated as lords, it indicates that they arose between the 18th and 20th centuries.

his fumes and show him who was the boss. So the first time they introduced him, he said right away:

"Aydan, I have heard that you are very intelligent, but do you have the ability to make all the inhabitants of Lijiang greet you?"

Aydan blinked back, "Okay. I'd also like to know which one of us is more famous."

"But it's no count if somebody else introduces you."Mr. Mu continued at once. As he thought "I am the magistrate of the city, I am called the *tusi*[95]governor, the great heavenly king, I have an official suit and hat. Who can be in Lijiang who does not know me? Who does not know Lord Mu? While Aydan just got back from the field. Who's going to meet this hillbilly?" So he told him proudly:

"Aydan. Let's do a test to see who's more famous. Let's do a test to see who's more famous. For it, we will leave the gate of the palace and we will make a turn until arriving at the Square Place, and then we will continue until the Eternal Tower[96]. He who finds fewer known people should invite the other in the Eternal Tower to a banquet. And also, if you lose, your salary this year will be cut in half, although you'll have to work the same."

Aydan replied: "All right sir, but no one can retract this agreement. And then I go to the toilet first if you don't mind."

"It's okay, it's okay. Go quickly." Said the Mu already anxious to achieve his victory. And as soon as he saw Aydan's head coming out of the toilet, he said in loud voice: "We'll start now."

As soon as he had said this, the Mu hurried out of the palace and ran, leaving Aydan to follow him in haste. As soon as he reached the first street, there were people who seeing he turned around and run away and others who walked away respectfully.

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95 Local ruler in the minority area during the imperial era.

96 Also called Wangu Tower, on Lion Hill, dominates the entire ancient city of Lijiang.

The Mu thought it was very strange, and could not help but turn his head to look at Aydan. Then he was stunned, for all the people on the street were looking at him, and even fighting to be the first to greet him aloud:

"Luoyu[97] Aydan."

"Aydan Luoyu."

And Aydan did not pay any attention to the Mu, but he did not stop waving at people with his hand.

In fact, when Aydan had entered the toilet he had written on a piece of paper: "Luoyu Aydan", and when he left the Mu palace he had hung it on his back, so when the people on the street saw him, they thought he was very curious and they all read it, giving the impression that they were greeting him. So the Mu, who usually had such a high air, was offended, so that when people saw him with such an angry face, they went out of his way without daring to greet him.

At that moment Aydan secretly took off his sign and put it up his sleeve, shouting aloud, "Mr. Mu. So far I've won, but I've walked behind, maybe you'd rather go behind and let me go ahead." Mr. Mu was not very convinced, but since he wanted to know how it was that all the people on the street greeted Aydan, he agreed.

As soon as Aydan stood in front of him, he sneaked out the sign again and placed it on his chest. Just when he had it put on, a group of people were coming in front of him. Everyone looked at his chest and said out loud, "Luoyu Aydan," and something similar happened every time he came across someone.

Aydan's name was already quite popular among the Naxi, but at that moment when they saw the character so strangely before their very eyes, all the people surrounded him in a moment, greeting him aloud: "Luoyu Aydan."

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[97] Luoyu is a way of calling the very intimate people among the Naxi.

The square was full of people, all interested in meeting Aydan, without anyone worrying about whether the Mu was there or not. Mr. Mu had not thought in any way that Aydan could meet so many people, all the streets were already blocked. So Aydan picked up his sign, with some difficulty he passed through the crowd around him and addressing the Mu he said:

"Sir, it's the word of a gentleman. What has been said cannot be understated. We're already waiting for you to take out your money to go celebrate it at the Eternal Tower."

Selling crazy pork

Among the Naxi, there is a proverb that says that in December people go crazy. This reflects that every year when this month comes and the New Year is near, between killing New Year's pigs, salting pork heads, hams, and loins[98] and preparing other necessary items for the holidays, each family is so busy that they walk like crazy from one place to another. In the houses of the rich families, the meat fills the beams of their stores, in those of the poor there is sometimes no meat to hang to cure.

The servants of the house of the Mu had spent a year full of difficulties, apart from the three meals necessary to satisfy their hunger, they had obtained little more. While in the Mu's house dozens of well-fattened pigs were killed, which hung filling a room with their aroma, and he had even left three very fat pigs, especially cared for and fattened like animals for sacrifice, one of them black with the head and white legs, to be offered to the ancestors during the Sacrifice to Heaven.

After suffering a whole year, the servants, seeing that they had not a piece of meat left, looked at those three pigs for the Sacrifice to Heaven with gluttony. So they decided to ask the ingenious Aydan to think of some ploy to get those three well-fattened pigs.

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[98] The Naxi delicatessen has certain similarities with the Spanish delicatessen, and even black puddings with a similar flavor can be found among them.

When they told him their plans, Aydan frowned and then replied in a low voice. Then they started laughing as they said, "Wonderful! Fantastic!"

Aydan then went to buy a good packet of pepper, which he ground very finely and mixed it with rice, making balls with which he fed the three pigs. After a while, the medicine began to take effect, as the pigs jumped like crazy trying to climb the walls of their pigsty.

Aydan ran into the master's house shouting, "Sir, sir! Something bad is happening! Something bad!"

"What's wrong?"

"The pigs! The pigs!" Aydan said in a choppy voice. "They've gone mad! The three pigs have gone mad!"

"What?" said the Mu incredulously. "In this world, everybody has heard of mad dogs. But when did you ever hear a pig going crazy?"

Aydan replied nervously, "They're crazy pigs. Really Sir! Come and see for yourself."

As the lord approached the pigsty to look, he saw a white slime coming out of the mouths of the three pigs, and their eyes were injected with blood. It seemed as if they wanted to push each other in order to position themselves with their heads down and their legs up. The Mu, who was not very brave himself, had never seen such a tremendous thing, so frightened he ran away, shouting as he walked away: "Quick, quick. Kill those three pigs."

"But you can't eat crazy pig meat." Aydan replied. "Sir, that crazy pork cannot be eaten. If a person eats it, he can go crazy."

The Mu, as if gathering all his courage thought that these pigs could no longer be used for the Sacrifice to Heaven[99], and if they were killed they could not be eaten either. But on the other hand,

[99] The animals used in the sacrifices had to be considered pure, which included certain rules on acceptable colors, and completely discarded pigs in that state.

without resigning himself to losing them, he still thought they could be sold for a few silver coins. So moved already by the desire for that profit, moving his hands with a fierce gesture decided that it would be best to kill them and sell them to get at least a little money. Once his decision was made, he ordered Aydan:

"Aydan, kill these pigs and go out on the street and sell them."

Aydan and other servants killed the pigs, cut them into pieces of different sizes, and carrying them they went out into the street to sell the meat. As they had agreed, they began to shout, "Come and buy some crazy pig meat. Crazy pig meat."

When people heard they were selling crazy pig meat, nobody wanted to buy it. So they went from one end of the street to the other offering their meat without selling anything at all, returning to the house at night just as they had gone out.

When Mr. Mu saw that all the flesh of the crazy pigs returned to the house, he frowned, arched his eyebrows, because the fierce image of the eyes injected into the blood of the three pigs returned to his mind, and, still trembling, he moved his hand ordering: "Bury all that!

Every one can imagine where the meat of those crazy pigs went.

Compensate me with a bear

There was a year when a very unpleasant event took place, for the Mu ordered his servants to gather the wheat and then thresh him. When they had already threshed it until not a grain was left, the lord arrived and ordered them to thresh it again. The workers were furious, for the whole floor was full of wheat straw, and they only wished to lie down to rest a little.

Aydan, unable to contain his words, protested, "What do you want us to thresh? There's not a grain of wheat left among the straws!"

When the lord heard him, he jumped up at once: "How dare you utter such unspiritual words at the time of harvest? You'll have to compensate me with wheat, at least two loads of wheat."

"All right. Come to my house tomorrow to get them." Aydan replied without hesitation.

Mr. Mu was very happy, for in the past he had always been mocked by Aydan and had the feeling that the next day he would make him pay for those mockeries. So he went home satisfied. The next morning he rode his horse and asked some of his men to accompany him, so that if Aydan refused to give him his wheat, they would give him a good beating, he set off.

Arriving at Aydan's house, he was found at the gate, sitting with an old shotgun in his hands, guarding a net he had hung. When Aydan saw the retinue arriving, he said to them: "Go a little

further, don't come in here. I'm hunting rabbits and mountain goats."

The. Mu and his men couldn't contain their laughter. "Are you hunting wild boars?" He asked with derision.

"That's right."

"And wolves?"

"Also."

"And you'll be hunting bears, too?"

"Effectively."

"What I see is you're going to see if you hunt any of your neighbor's chickens or pigs." the lord said with a chuckle. "Well, I see you at the gate of your house spreading a half-broken net. How are you going to hunt rabbits or goats? Wolves or bears? What you are..."

Then Aydan leaped in anger: "How dare you say those un-auspicious words at the time of the hunt? You'll have to compensate me with a few pieces. At least you'll have to make it up to me with a rabbit, a mountain goat, a wolf, and a bear. Yes, that will be the compensation."

Nervous the Mu said, "Forget it, forget it. I don't want your wheat." And he set out to return home. But Aydan grabbed him insisting that he wanted to be compensated, so that only when his henchmen pulled him while holding Aydan was he able to free himself and ride his horse. He still had to hear Aydan's screams: "Well, okay. As you wish."

Whose calf is this?

The house of the honest Asi was right next to the great courtyard of the palace of the Mu lords. The house of the Mu was the richest in Lijiang, while that of Asi was among the poor, but while the latter was only concerned with earning an honest living, The Mu was always thinking of ways to squeeze a little more out of these poor people to the point of leaving them without a drop of strength.

One day the Mu heard that in the house of Asi the sow had given birth to a litter of piglets, so he went to visit him with the idea of seizing them. As soon as he arrived at Asi's house, he asked: "The sow of your house has given birth to a litter, hasn't she?"

"That's right, sir." Asi replied.

"All right, then take all the little pigs." He ordered the servants who accompanied him.

And when he heard him, Asi rose in fear: "Why are you taking them away? These are my little pigs."

"Think about it." Mr. Mu told him. "In your house there is only one sow who has given birth to these offspring. If it weren't for my pig, how could she have given birth to them all by herself? Those little pigs naturally must return to the house of the Mu." And as soon as he had finished speaking he beckoned his servants to take the piglets and returned to his palace.

Aydan watched this whole scene and couldn't help but feel bad about the injustice done. "As rich as the Mu is, how can he have such a covetous heart to want to seize the poor man's miserable belongings?" He thought to himself.

Some days later the Mu cow gave birth to a beautiful calf that was stumbling and struggling to get up. Suddenly the Mu saw two of his servants running in. When they stood before him, they told him that they had seen Aydan and Asi taking the calf that had just given birth to the latter's house.

"Aydan again," exclaimed the Mu. "He dares to steal a calf from me in broad daylight. I'll catch him right away, and we'll settle the score." As soon as he had finished speaking he went like a madman to the house of the honest Asi, finding in the courtyard Aydan and Asi laughing happily. As soon as the Mu saw them, he shouted furiously: "Thieves! You're two thieves! You dare to steal a calf from me in broad daylight."

After waiting for Mr. Mu to let off steam with his cries and insults, Aydan, seeing him calmer, confidently said to him: "Who is a thief? Who can dare steal from you?"

"You stole my calf, and now I'm going to catch you." The Mu shouted.

"But isn't Asi's calf?" Aydan asked mockingly.

"This is my calf. What do you mean that is Asi's?"

"Did not you explain to Asi a few days ago with very clear words, that when his sow gave birth to piglets he could not have given birth to them without the pig of your house? The piglets naturally that were for you... Is not this the same case? How could your cow give birth to this calf if it had not been for Asi's bull? This calf does not belong then to him?"

"What nonsense...!" He the Mu began saying, but then, realizing that he had no escape, he chose to look like a dignified exit, so as he went to the door, he continued to say goodbye:

"What you say is very reasonable. You have more and more experience and knowledge." Returning to his palace angry.

The Mu loses weight

The Mu was pretty fat and breathing worse and worse. Even though he'd been trying to lose weight for a while, the truth is that he was still the same. So thinking and thinking he decided that it would be best to go see Aydan and ask him about this problem. Then he called him into his presence and said to him, "Are you not so clever? Well, now you must think of a remedy for me to lose weight. If I lose weight I'll give you a prize, but if you don't get it, I'll punish you. Is that clear?"

Aydan acted as if it were a very complex matter, and replied, "Sir. If you are fat or thin, what's that to do with me? How are you going to punish me?"

"Aydan, I think nothing is impossible for you. At least it used to be like that." Said the Mu trying to ridicule Aydan.

"What I'm afraid of is that the master can lose weight, and then fatten, and so on..."

"I'm not going to blame you. It's about me losing weight and that's it." The Mu cut him off without waiting for him to finish talking.

The next day Aydan went to look for the Mu and said, "You want to lose weight, don't you? In your garden there's a magic herb. I don't know how it's going to be now. But if a person digs this grass and eats it, if he wants to gain weight can gain, and he wants to lose weight, can lose."

"Really?"

"Of course. If you don't believe me, go dig and see."

That night, the Mu waited until everyone was asleep to go to his garden to dig, getting a good number of herbs, but not knowing what the magic herb would be he cooked all the herbs together and ate them. But of course, he was still as fat as before.

So that this man who used to eat meat and fish, chickens and ducks, now had his belly full of herbs, and so he went to look for Aydan to settle accounts: "Aydan! You still dare to deceive me! I've dug all over the courtyard and tasted all the herbs there were, so how come I didn't find the magic herb you're talking about?"

"Did you perhaps use a shovel or a hoe to dig?" Aydan asked.

"Of course. Otherwise, how else am I going to dig?"

"But those herbs can't touch the iron. If they do, they become normal herbs."

"You're mocking me again. No matter what you say, I'm still just as fat. I'll have to punish you."

"If you don't believe me then forget it, but it's still too early to punish me because I know another method that will make you lose weight."

"What method?" asked the Mu again interested.

"On the mountain grows a type of mushroom that can make anyone who eats it slender."

"Really?" he asked hopefully. "Go quickly to find her."

"I'll need three whole days to fill a basket."

"Pick up a little more, pick up a little more."

So Aydan went to the mountain to pick these mushrooms. Three days later he came down from the mountain with a basket full of very nice mushrooms. The Mu immediately ordered his servants to cook them and then called his wives and children to eat them. But then, fearing that Aydan was playing a trick on him and the mushrooms were poisonous, he had the dog try them. Only

when they saw that nothing was wrong with the dog, the Mu and his family ate the mushrooms.

As soon as they tasted them they discovered that they were delicious, so soon they were fighting to eat them. As soon as they were finished, Aydan came running and said, "Lord. There's bad news. The dog is dead."

The whole family was livid, clutching each other's bellies as they lamented. Aydan thought it was a lot of fun. The Mu then ordered: "Servants, go and call the doctor. Call the doctor!"

When he heard that they had eaten poisonous mushrooms, he prescribed them a laxative, and in a short time, the whole Mu palace was full of vomit and stool. The news of the Mu's illness spread throughout Lijiang and people climbed the palace walls to see which members of the family were going to die and which were going to live, discovering the palace in such a state, full of holes and filth, the house of this proud family turned into a pigsty and its members from one side to the other vomiting.

At that moment Aydan entered the palace pretending to be very alarmed and said, "What's going on?"

The Mu said aloud, "Your mushrooms have poisoned my dog, and you still want to poison my family."

"How?" said Aydan. "That dog? But hasn't a hungry homeless man eaten it?"

"What?" the whole family exclaimed in unison, as golden stars appeared before their eyes. So what they actually ate wasn't poisonous.

When Aydan left the Mu, his wife and family began to celebrate not having suffered any poisoning. While they cursed Aydan for giving them a hard time.

Suddenly Aydan entered the palace of Mu again, shouting nervously: "Lord. That's bad news. The vagabond is dead."

"How did he die?" They all asked him again in distress. And since Aydan didn't respond, they insisted, "Is he... the one who ate the dog?"

"Yes. The same."

The riot started again in the palace of the Mu. The Mu himself fainted, and the servants went to find the doctor again, who prescribed them a new laxative and turned the Mu's courtyard into an increasingly dirty place.

At that moment Aydan entered the palace again, and seeing them all in that state, he asked feigning innocence: "But why this mess? Just because a hungry tramp has choked on a dog bone."

"When the Mu's wife and children heard his words, they arose, and the Mu himself, who had just awakened from his fainting, again vanished with joy.

With all this, the Mu spent several days in bed and lost 18 kilos. When he recovered, Aydan went to visit him: "My mushrooms weren't bad, were they? Does the gentleman still want to lose some more weight? And when is he going to give me the prize?"

Proverbs of the Naxi

- The sharper the knife, the more you are using it.
- If the warrior takes the wrong path, he encounters death.
- By putting knowledge into practice, you will discover your helplessness.
- Beautiful flowers grow on fertile soil.
- With salt and oil, even the leaves of the tree are tasty.
- The bird that doesn't know how to make a nest has nowhere to lay its eggs.
- People see you walking, but they don't know what you're eating.
- If your arms are weak, the sharp ax is useless.
- If you try it three times, I'm sure you'll get it.

- Build a good bridge before the floods start.
- Although the silo is overflowing with grain, each time you can only take a handful.
- The water flows to the bottom of the valley, the fire rises to the top.
- A sorrow in the heart is worse than ten in the body.
- The leopard can't erase its spots.
- What's being said cannot be unsaid.
- Snow is white but you don't eat it.
- You don't know the difficulty of a job until you've done it.
- The running water finds its way.
- No matter how big the fish is, you can't catch it without a net.
- Only from the top of the mountain can you see the distance.
- The longest way is behind your heels.
- Even the highest peak can be under your feet.
- If you don't go into the woods, you won't hunt a bear.

- Although the two hands are the same, their capabilities are different.
- Don't chase the rat until breaking your furniture.
- Waiting to eat swan meat, you fill your eyes but not your stomach.
- Don't do business with your relatives.
- Even though people live the same way, they talk differently.
- A great thunder is not yet rain, the roar of the tiger does not eat the man.
- A good dream is as good as a kilo of lamb.
- When the cuckoo sings in spring, a hundred flowers bloom.
- Only when the grain is ripe, the man is calm.
- Other people's food is delicious, but sleeping at home is sweeter.
- If the mother is hospitable, the child will always have a roof over his head.
- It's better to lose a father, even if he's a king, to a mother, even if she's a beggar.

- The mother's call sounds in all directions.
- Even with nine mansions, one bed is enough at night.
- He follows the goat on good days, and the sheep on bad days.
- Jackals don't live in the land of fierce tigers.
- The most beautiful flowers don't bloom forever.
- The most beautiful flowers are often covered by leaves.
- Poisoned by mushrooms, he doesn't go to the mountains for three years.
- You don't feed on the beautiful woman, on the virtuous you never stop.
- There are those who attack others to elevate themselves.
- There are sweet poisons and bitter medicines.
- Sweet mouth, evil heart.
- Bad men have bad friends, and good men have good friends.

- Envying the beautiful butterfly dance, the dragonfly hangs and dies.
- The tooth is hard but suffers caries, the gum is soft and avoids it.
- A mouse bites your ass and sometimes you don't know it.
- A skillful hand doesn't beat an agile heart.
- Rice, the more you wash, the whiter, and charcoal, the blacker.
- He who steals an egg when he's little, when older steals an ox.
- He who doesn't learn when he's young doesn't know when he's old.
- The deep valley always has water, the strong root never breaks.
- Being by the great river doesn't mean you have water[100].
- Even if the great woods burn, you may not have a fire.

[100] Especially true among them, for many of their rivers run between cliffs.

- The power of the tiger must be shown, the ingenuity of man must be disguised.
- The young man is the father's companion, the young woman, the mother's.
- A tree doesn't make a forest or a house a village.
- Good deeds are soon forgotten, bad deeds are hard to forget.
- The rich unite with the rich, the poor help the poor.
- If the wind doesn't blow, the leaves don't move.
- If the mother-in-law is too smart, the daughter-in-law can leave the house.
- For hunting a wild animal, nine domestic animals are lost.
- The dark clouds do not stain the snow, nor the white snow the green firs.
- If they don't raise him when he's little, he can't get big.
- If the bitch barks, the puppies imitate her.
- It's worthier a closer neighbor than a distant relative.

- If you throw a stone into the sky, it'll fall on your head.
- Three months of sunshine are good, but three cloudy days are annoying.
- If you don't see the dead man, you won't cry.
- Knowing a lot is not a burden, having good taste is not tiring.

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